DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 268 PS 014 807

AUTHOR	Michie, Meredith, Ed.
TITLE	Institute of Family Studies Newsletter; No. 10, August 1984.
INSTITUTION	Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne (Australia).
PUB DATE	Aug 84
NOTE	41p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Institute of Family Studies, 766 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne 3000, Australia (no price quoted).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
JOURNAL CIT	Institute of Family Studies Newsletter; n10 Aug 1984
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Conferences; Databases; Divorce; *Family (Sociological Unit); Family Attitudes; Family Financial Resources; *Family Programs; Family Structure; Federal Legislation; Feminism; Foreign Countries; Government Role; Marriage; Poverty; *Public Policy; Research Needs; *Research Projects; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS	*Australia; England; Greece; West Germany

ABSTRACT

This newsletter's first article is the director's report "Double Standards in Australian Family Policy" by Don Edgar. It asks for government support for families in the form of programs and funding, not just rhetoric. The next article, "IFS Research", also by Don Edgar, details the past, current and future research of the Institute of Family Studies. Short articles by researchers in the Institute follow: "Remarriage Data" (Christine Kilmartin); "IFS Study of the Economic Consequences of Marriage Breakdown: Progress Report" (Peter McDonald); "Family (Law?) Centres" (Don Edgar); "Adolescence and the Family" (Gay Ochiltree); "Video Vignettes on Stepfamily Dynamics" (Ilene Wolcott); "Social Statistics: A Comment" (Peter McDonald); "Social Psychology and the Family: A Report on the Annual General Meeting of the Australia Social Psychologists" (Paul Amato); "Dependent Spouse Rebates and Their Incidence" (Kerry Lovering); "Changes for Women in Greece" (Liz Sharman); and "Changes in European Family Law: England and West Germany" (Margaret Harrison). Short Features include book reviews and articles about: (1) changes in Institute staff; (2) titles recently published by IFS; (3) the Australian Family Studies Database (AFAM), which includes bibliographic informaton about publications on families and family life in Australia; (4) the Work and Family Information Centre in New York City; and (5) conferences and workshops held in fall 1984 in Melbourne. (CB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ISSN 0159-9143 ED255288 No. 10 August 1984

NEWSLETTER

SCOPE OF INTEREST NOTICE
The ERIC Facility has assigned this document for processing to: PS
In our judgement, this document is also of interest to the clearinghouses noted to the right. Indexing should reflect their special points of view. CG

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Director's Report

Double standards in Australian family policy

I am increasingly dismayed at the blind eye politicians of every ilk turn to family policy issues. On the one hand is the rhetoric of each Party about the centrality of the family unit, the good deeds they will do for families, their concern for motherhood, the welfare of the nation's children, the viability of the family home. On the other, sits an ignorance of what is happening to Australian families, of their real needs and problems and (worst of all) of the way every policy impacts on family life. As Bronfenbrenner and Weiss put it:

> Social scientists are subject to an ethical code that prohibits them from exposing children to situations that are injurious to their welfare. Unfortunately, there is no such restriction on the nation as a whole or on its duly empowered leaders and policy makers (in Zigler, Kagan and Klugman, 1983).

The fact that they are referring to the situation in the United States is no consolation for Australia's leaders; the situtations are closely parallel.

Three recent examples add to my alarm about the political failure to put real money and real policies in the mouth of pro-family rhetoric.

Needs-based welfare

In a recent submission to the Senate Committee on Retirement Incomes, it was claimed that a national superannuation scheme would be inconsistent with the federal government's needs-based welfare policy. Without at present examining the details of what sort of national superannuation scheme might or might not benefit the 'relatively well-off aged' as well as those in need, I should have thought some challenge to the 'needs-based' approach would have been in order.

At first sight the argument that with limited budgetary resources priority in welfare transfers should be given to those in need seems unassailable. But this argument begs at least two questions. First, it begs the question that the current budgetary allocation to such needs is adequate, and, second, that such needs are not universal at least at some point in every individual's life cycle. As I indicated in the last *Newsletter*, calls for better child care on the basis of the 'needs' of working women or one-parent families deflect attention from the real need for every child and every parent to have access to flexible and varied forms of subsidised child care. The same point holds for many other aspects of need; the right of every individual to a basic income which underlies most categories of need.

Needs-based welfare reflects a deficit model or what Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1983) calls 'encounters of the first kind'. That is, to qualify for help, potential recipients must first prove they and/or their families are inadequate. Worse, they must document their inadequacy, fill out forms, subject themselves to checks which invade their privacy; in short, blame themselves and support a vast bureaucracy to sustain that self-definition.

Needs-based systems are also usually categorical, that is, people are classified into the types of problems they represent. They are unemployed, homeless, deserted wives, single mothers, handicapped, aged, or in other ways dependent.

Rarely is the central question asked — *why* are they dependent? Or if it is asked, the blaming process once again deflects attention from the main cause to more vulnerable 'secondary victims' such as the 'immoral' single mother, deserting parent or maintenance defaulter. Politically motivated attacks on welfare costs always hone in on these categories of recipients rather than the aged who receive 42 per cent of all welfare spending, or the family allowance expenditure of 12 per cent which should rightly be treated as part of the taxation/income-maintenance area rather than as 'welfare'.

Moreover, the evidence of what effect this categorical, 'needs' approach has on recipients overwhelmingly suggests stigmatisation, resentment, degradation, and puni-

PS 01480

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Mari Davis
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Institute of Family Studies

Contents

Director's Report 1
IFS Research 6
Remarriage Data 8
Economic Consequences of Marriage Breakdown 9
Family (Law?) Centres 10
Adolescence and the Family 12
Video Vignettes 18
Social Statistics: A Comment 19
Family Impact Assessment in Tasmania 20
Social Psychology and the Family 21
Dependent Spouse Rebates 24
Changes for Women in Greece 24
Changes in European Family Law 25
IFS Publications — New Charges 28
Who's Who at the Institute 31
AFAM Report 32
Workplace as a Focus for Family Support 34
Book Reviews 35
The Conference/Workshop Circuit 37

This edition is compiled and edited by Meredith Michie

Published by the Institute of Family Studies
766 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne 3000 Australia
Telephone: (03) 342 9100
Any information about conferences, seminars or workshops for inclusion in our conference circuit column can be sent to the Editor at the above address.
This publication is not copyright.
Reproduction for distribution to others is permissible. Use of individual articles for reproduction in other newsletters is also permissible provided the source of the material is acknowledged.

Typeset by Bookset, Melbourne
Printed by Globe Press Pty Ltd
Designed by Lauren Statham
Photographs by Simon Freidin and Don Whyte
ISSN 0159-9143

tiveness which 'takes a substantial toll on the individual's self-esteem and the family's capacity to function' (Weiss, 1979:139).

Study after study highlights the 'Catch-22' situation of those at or near the poverty line. In Australia, anomalies in eligibility criteria for various welfare payments lead to work disincentive effects via excessive marginal taxation rates on supplementary income earned.

Needs-based welfare can create a 'poverty trap' when it depends strongly on means testing, when income tests for eligibility are not indexed for inflation, when they are not designed to encourage a return to paid work and when there are inadequate adult training and retraining schemes and poor provisions for child care or parental leave (West, 1984).

Because cut-off points must be set arbitrarily, those who do receive payments 'feel the full weight of the deficit model, while those who do not receive aid face a desperate struggle for survival' (Bronfenbrenner, 1983:396). Our own Family Support Networks Study supports this view and reflects the US findings that within a value system favouring individualism and self-sufficiency, the deficit model is offensive and flies in the face of what people themselves say they need.

Given the major changes in Australian family life which we documented in our last *Annual Report* — later age at marriage and birth of first child, the falling birthrate, the rising divorce rate, the rapid rise in one-parent families and single-person households, the rise in maternal employment and the number of families affected by unemployment — it is not surprising to find the recent title of a book by Kamerman (1980), *Parenting in an unresponsive society*, has as much relevance here as in the United States.

Impact of unemployment on families

The second reason for my concern about family policy is the stubborn persistence of discussion about unemployment in terms of the labour market and economics rather than in terms of human hardship and family suffering. No doubt every economist and every politician knows that unemployment has human costs, but they fail to think of (un)employment as family policy. The same could be said of other areas such as housing, education and health.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In the real world of everyday life it is the family which bears the brunt of economic planning, it is the family as a collective economy which must divide up the pay packet or the dole cheque for food, rent, clothing and other needs. The main component of need is, quite simply, lack of money. And the main cause of lack of money is the inability to earn an income via gainful employment. Intervening factors such as the presence of dependent children, accident or ill-health are not the real cause. Dependency of every kind reflects lack of income in order to cope as an independent person with the necessities of life. Thus an adequate income is the most basic, and a universal, need.

Yet policy makers continue to talk complacently about economic models, about balancing the budget, about the continuation of high unemployment trends. Despite their assertion that good planning will lead (eventually) to higher employment, they fail to recognise the importance of jobs and income for family survival, both economically and psychologically. The old 'trickle down' argument in effect means that those who already have least must suffer most in the interests of economic recovery (Barker, 1984).

Since the 1930s, family research has demonstrated the impact of loss of jobs on family life. Lower status, conflict, withdrawal from wider social contacts all exacerbate the financial problems and lead to family breakdown. More recent studies by Elder (1974, 1979) have shown how the effects of unemployment on adults spill over into effects on children and their later life prospects. The costs go far beyond those for unemployment benefits or the costs of divorce.

Elder looked at those whose loss of income during the 1930s Depression exceeded or fell short of a 35 per cent loss. His two samples included children who were still young at that time and those who were adolescents when their families became deprived. Dramatic differences emerge. The teenagers seem to have risen to the challenge, taking on new responsibilities to keep the family going. As a result these young people (in both middle and working class groups) subsequently did better in school and college, had happier marriages, more successful careers and expressed higher life satisfaction than those whose families were not deprived.

However, those who were still preschoolers suffered badly in later development. They did less well at school, had less stable or successful work histories and carried their emotional and social scars into middle adulthood.

Human costs of poverty

Hence my even greater concern at our latest analysis of Australians in poverty. Figures from the 1981-82 ABS Income Survey show a significant rise since 1978-79 in the proportion of families with children with incomes less than the poverty line. Our estimate is that between 951 000 and 1.6 million Australians have incomes below the poverty line. The higher estimate would mean that 24.3 per cent of families, almost one family in every four, had an income after tax which left them facing hardship. In terms of individuals, we calculate that between 1.8 and 2.8 million people had an income in 1981-82 less than the poverty line. These figures include up to 752 000 children. Between 48 and 60 per cent of one-parent families have below poverty line incomes.

Again, comparison with the United States is no consolation. There, 13 per cent of the population, but more than a fifth (22 per cent) of all children up to age six, were living in families below the poverty line (US Bureau of the Census, 1982:1). And there, the Reagan government is busily reducing expenditure on domestic programs (i.e., prenatal care, child nutrition, and health, day care, recreational and vocational programs for school-age children) in the belief that much is being wasted on those who are not truly needy.

The need for family support

Poverty does not mean simply shortage of food, clothing, adequate housing, heating, or schooling. It has other human costs as well.

In a Californian study of the effects of inflation on 8000 families, Steinberg, Catalano and Dooley (1981) found that increases in child abuse were preceded by periods of high job loss. Similarly, Garbarino (1976) reported that child abuse and maltreatment was strongly associated with inadequate support systems for parenting and economic stress. Even economists use the term 'misery index' to describe 'the unemployment plus inflation percentage'. One wonders whether they really understand what it means.

Where are the funds to build adequate family support systems or to reduce economic stress? Where are the funds for marriage preparation, preventive marriage guidance programs, financial counselling and parent support?

Instead, we have a meagre $3.8m for marriage counselling, a mere $80 000 for marriage education, $170 000 for a new 'advertising campaign' for marriage guidance, an as yet vague move to establish 'Family Law Centres', totally inadequate child care and family support services and a resentment (across the political spectrum) of the funds paid to supporting parents.

What seems to be the problem is what I began with — a long bow on rhetoric and a short string on real family policy. Let me stress that my remarks apply across the political spectrum, so there is no party political mileage to be made by anyone.

Complacency cannot continue in the light of the poverty figures quoted above. Nor can complacency or even concern unsupported by funds and action continue in relation to the Family Court. Unloved by anyone, but there as a fact because people now demand the right to no fault divorce, the Family Court cannot survive without improved funding and staffing. Recent tragic bombings, threats to Court personnel including counsellors, registrars and lawyers, the rolling strike by counsellors all reflect a growing frustration with this most sensitive area of the law. Delays lead to anger and frustration; hasty proceedings cause resentment and bitterness; lack of finance and staffing mean tension, low morale, despair on the part of those trying to make this a 'helping Court'. The Chief Judge has tried many times and in many ways to institute less adversarial procedures, to extend the conciliation and mediation facilities into pre-divorce and pre-legal stages. But only so much can be done without the necessary support.

The answer to attacks such as those experienced is not to increase security or return to more formal court procedures. As the Chief Judge insists, it is to extend information and advisory services and to move divorce increasingly away from the adversarial context of the law. (See our report on 'Family Centres' in this issue.) Here again there is a political double standard. Those in power cannot seem to find the money; those out of power use the situation to criticise the law, the courts, the 'evil' of divorce. They once again fail to recognise that these are *families*, and families in real need of help. Moreover, they fail to recognise, or to fund, procedures which would help prevent some of the conflict, hardship and incompetence that lead to marriage breakdown.

Action for family support

It is time to call for action, to demand a systematic approach to family support. It is time to abolish the term welfare and to talk of family support, of positive action for the well-being of all families rather than merely meeting needs as they arise or finding patch-up solutions to what are social structural problems. Both national superannuation and some form of negative income tax scheme are worth exploring rather than simply dismissing them as too 'impractical' or too 'universal'.

Bronfenbrenner and Weiss (1983) suggest five 'preposterous proposals' that are not a bad starting point. Put briefly, they are that:

1 a curriculum of caring be instituted in the schools, to develop human relationships through active helping contacts between the young and the old, the sick, the slow and the lonely;
2 a cooperative extension service be extended to create empowering and supportive social networks in local communities;
3 the prevailing pattern of employment be altered for both men and women so they work three-quarter time, leaving the rest for parenting and other 'living' activity;
4 there be a substantial increase in the number of women in positions of decision-making and power so that human concerns can counter the dominant male technocratic focus;
5 federal programs be expanded to ensure jobs and viable incomes to all families with young children.

As they put it, 'one telling criterion of the worth of a society . . . is the concern of one generation for the next. A nation's child and family policy is the measure of that concern'.

In the first paper published by this Institute I described the family as 'the crucible of competence', where our children's possibilities for control are forged:

> The family has always been the first line of support (both emotional and financial) for the individual facing the social structure. Other mediating structures (the Church, community groups, clubs, the Boy Scouts, etc.) may have declined in influence, but the family still nurtures, protects, feeds, teaches, bullies, restricts and opens up basic life possibilities for the individual. The family 'interprets the world' to every child, gives it a language and basic skills that make interaction with the world possible. The family either provides a sense of competence, of self worth, a sense of power and of social respect; or it provides the reverse sense of incompetence, powerlessness, lack of respect and self-denigration that says your place in the world is of low status and your chances of influencing anything are limited (Edgar, 1980).

Against the conservative critics who want policies to recognise only those families that conform to their definition of family, I would assert that every family with children (or the potential to have children) needs our policy concern. Against the radical critics who are preoccupied with the equality of adult relationships and who seem to define the family in terms of adults in isolation from the nee s of children and parents, I would assert that more attention must be paid to the problems of families that are raising children. I would agree with Andrew Cherlin (1983) that the classical liberal belief in personal autonomy takes little account of the need for compromise and sharing in any close human relationship.

So the agenda for family policy must be to ask what kinds of families are better for children and to insist upon structures that support and sustain an equality in the sharing of family rights and obligations. But, as Cherlin and others suggest, this will require a radical look at the structures of work, education and child care. The agenda for family policy will be similar to that of the 1980 White House Conference on Families, including more flexible working hours, more shared and part-time jobs with benefits on a pro rata basis, parental leave and changes in personnel policies that work in the interests of families with children.

Accepting that governments cannot and probably should not tackle everything that can be called a family problem, we must insist that governments at least support families (whether married or de facto, whether one or two parent) who have children to care for. A true pro-family policy is not one which blames or seeks to punish; it is one which recognises the universal need for family support, the importance for both present and future well-being of the nation's children, and which puts economic planning and market forces in their proper context — that of ensuring the best possible life for every family unit.

Don Edgar
Director
July 1984

References

Barker, G. (1984), 'Efficiency at the expense of equity', *The Age*, Melbourne, 22 June.

Bronfenbrenner, U. and Weiss, H. B. (1983), 'Beyond policies without people: an ecological perspective on child and family policy', in E. F. Zigler, S. L. Kagan and E. Klugman (eds.), *Children, families and government*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979), 'Beyond the deficit model in child and family policy', *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 81, No. 1, pp. 95-104.

Edgar, D. E. (1980), *Towards an Australian family policy*, Discussion Paper No. 1, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

Elder, G. H. Jr. (1974), *Children of the great depression*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Elder, G. H. Jr. (1979), 'Historical change in life patterns and personality', in P. Baltes and O. Brim (eds.), *Life-span development and behaviour*, Vol. 11, Academic Press, New York.

Garbarino, J. (1976), 'A preliminary study of some ecological correlates of child abuse: the impact of socio-economic stress on mothers', *Child Development*, Vol. 47, pp. 178-185.

Kamerman, S. B. (1980), *Parenting in an unresponsive society*, Free Press, New York.

Steinberg, L. D., Catalano, R. and Dooley, P. (1981), 'Economic antecedents for child abuse and neglect', *Child Development*, Vol. 52, pp. 975-985.

Weiss, Heather B. (1979), 'Parent education and support: an analysis of the Brookline Early Education Project', Ed. D., Harvard, referred to in Zigler and others, p. 403, 414.

West, Rosemary (1984), 'Mothers in the poverty trap', *The Age*, Melbourne, 4 July, p. 22.

Zigler, E. F., Kagan, S. L. and Klugman, E. (eds.) (1983), *Children, families and government*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

IFS Research

by Don Edgar,
IFS Director

Don Edgar

Both for new *Newsletter* readers and for those who have followed our work with interest over the past four years, we thought a quick summary of our research progress might be useful in this issue.

When we began in 1980, I drafted a '7 Year Research Plan' to guide our efforts. The Board of Management agreed to this, stressing that IFS priorities should be the importance of positive programs of support for families and the needs of children.

That overall plan was built round three ongoing projects:

- the *Family Formation Project*, aimed at discovering how a national sample of 2 500 young Australians felt about getting married and having children and what factors influence their decisions for the future;
- the *Family Dissolution/Reformation Project*, looking at the 'other end' of the process as marriages dissolve, the reasons why, how people cope, the legal process of divorce and its economic and social consequences, re-marriage and step-parenting;
- the *Family Policy Impact Project*, designed to examine the ways in which government policies and procedures impact in different ways on families of different kinds.

From these three broad 'trunks' we planned to branch off into more qualitative studies of specific issues. These would be done by the Institute itself, by contracted researchers and through support grants to outside research groups.

In the main, that plan has proved workable, although we have had to juggle our limited finances, shift priorities to address more immediate issues from time to time, and extend our over-ambitiously tight timetable for the completion of studies. We are well on the way to completing the first phase of major studies which are as follows.

Family Formation Project – reports on 'Leaving Home' by Christobel Young, 'De Facto Couples' by Siew Ean Khoo, 'Getting Married' by Gordon Carmichael, 'Ethnic Family Formation' by Siew Ean Khoo and 'Young Australians' Family Values' by Helen Glezer, are all nearing completion. The data have been prepared for archiving and tape access by other researchers and a Study Guide Book is being printed.

In addition, a set of case studies of 'happily married, intact couples' from this national sample of 2 500 has been done by Helen Glezer and Tamara Kotler. This will give us a picture of how couples negotiate their roles in the newly formed family and the main factors affecting family functioning and marital satisfaction.

Family Dissolution/Reformation Project – a major report on our sample of 295 divorced persons is almost ready. In addition, contracted studies of the impact of divorce on (a) young children and (b) adolescents have been done by Rosemary Dunlop and Ailsa Burns, and Geoff Smiley and Edna Chamberlain respectively.

The variety of ethnic differences proved so difficult to cover that we also contracted to several researchers studies of existing research on 'Ethnic Family Values'. These are now edited and will be published as a book by Prentice-Hall Australia Pty Ltd later this year.

Family Policy Impact Project – has already produced the following published reports:

- *Equity and the impact on families of the Australian tax transfer system*, by Peter Saunders
- *Services to families*, by Jim Alexander
- *Towards a national child care policy*, by Deborah Brennan
- *Should families be a focus for policies?*, by Frank Maas
- *Children in stepfamilies*, by Patricia Harper

- *Marriage counselling services*, by Ilene Wolcott
- *A roof over their heads*, by Terry Burke, Linda Hancock and Peter Newton.

We have continued to publish (with the Social Welfare Research Centre and the Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research) annual volumes of the *Diary of social legislation and policy*.

We have run nation-wide Family Policy Impact Seminars in the major cities on

- family policy and IFS research priorities
- community-based services for families
- housing policies and housing needs

and we have coordinated national workshops on

- infertility
- adoption
- marriage counselling
- one-parent families
- the tax-transfer system
- family health
- children's services

each of which was either based on or resulted in a published report by the Institute.

Perhaps the most exciting development in the family policy area is our AFIT (Australian Families Income Transfer) Project, a computer model which enables us to cost and test the impacts on different family types of changes in tax and welfare provisions. Our first *AFIT Bulletin* was published in June this year.

Other, specialised studies

As indicated earlier, the three main 'trunks' of IFS research had other more specialised studies attached to them. These reflected our interests in the role of education in family life, the nature of family communication and the role of extended family networks in supporting family life.

A major study on 'Children in Families' is now completed. This looked at both young children and adolescents in 'intact' and 're-formed' families. Our focus was on the way children view family life and their active use of family resources in the development of competence. This study challenges several of the myths about 'one-parent families' and highlights the impact of conflict on children's competence and sense of self-esteem in all family types.

Our 'Family Support Networks' Study began in Geelong but has now been extended to samples in New South Wales and the Northern Territory. It shows clearly that families have *not* abandoned their own, rely on formal welfare support only when absolutely necessary, and it suggests several new directions for building on existing informal networks for family support.

The study planned on 'Communication in Families' was to have been an 'anthropological' field observation study of how the mass media (especially TV) affect family communication patterns. Lack of funds and staff prevented us from doing this, but we linked up with an international Prix Jeunesse project to look at the 'images of family' portrayed on Australian television. A report by Don Stewart called *The television family* has been published, and a chapter on our findings is contained in the international report edited by James Halloran.

Several of the Institute's Support Grants have produced excellent results. We publish reports based on these grants either in the *Newsletter* or in separate publications such as the most recent one by Robin Winkler and Margaret van Keppel titled *Relinquishing mothers in adoption*. In every case, the report submitted to us by the grantee is filed in the Family Information Centre for access by the wider public.

Current research

Our major preoccupation at the moment is the 'Economic Consequences of Divorce' study, an extension of our initial 'Family Reformation Project', which is directed specifically towards assisting the Matrimonial Property Inquiry headed by Professor David Hambly of the Australian Law Reform Commission. This involves 850 interviews with divorced persons in various categories of marriage duration and at different stages of child rearing. The study will provide the first Australian data on how property is divided on divorce and on changes in the standards of living of the men, women and children whose lives are so affected.

The Institute staff is also in the initial stages of planning the follow-up study of our 'Family Formation' sample, and a new national study of 'Family Functioning', how people manage work and family lives given their constraints of time, money and energy. We have completed a study of the costs of children which may require further work, and

we would like to follow up our 'children's' sample to obtain more information on educational outcomes of family experience and on the process of step-parenting. We also want urgently to improve public understanding in the youth, child care and planning for retirement policy areas, but our budget for 1984-85 provides inadequate funds for this purpose.

In sum, the Australian Institute of Family Studies has completed several important projects. We have published 88 reports and papers plus 6 revised editions. A more detailed summing up of our findings so far is contained in the *Annual Report* 1982-83 which is to be republished as the first of our new (and major) series — 'Australian Families Report'.

Remarriage Data

by Christine Kilmartin,
IFS Research Fellow

Christine Kilmartin

'Just code these sixty thousand forms, please', was the request made to the four coders who began an 18 week assignment at the Institute in late April.

The four — Maryanne Busuttil, Quach Le Linh, Rhonda Pentecost and Mandy Turner — have been employed under the Commonwealth Community Employment Program (CCEP) to code data from the Notice of Intended Marriage forms — forms completed by every marrying couple. As we explained in our *Annual Report* 1982-83, some of the data supplied on these forms, namely, the questions filled in by any person who is remarrying, have not been coded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) since 1977. As several States still had some or all of the forms for the period 1977-1982, the Institute requested, and was granted, permission to code this missing remarriage information for analysis. So the four coders have been working to remedy that gap, coding

Remarriage data coders check the latest print out. From left (standing) Quach Le Linh, Maryanne Busuttil, (seated) Mandy Turner, Allen Taylor, Rhonda Pentecost.

information on date of previous marriage, number and ages of children, and date of termination of previous marriage.

Their output has been so efficient that we have been able to set them some extra coding tasks to record other information also stored on the documents.

Comparison of addresses given by bride and groom on Notice of Intended Marriage forms

	% of total addresses of groom and bride identical and complete (a)		% of total addresses of groom and bride identical but incomplete (b)		% of total addresses of groom and bride non-identical (c)	
	Both never married	*One or both remarrying*	*Both never married*	*One or both remarrying*	*Both never married*	*One or both remarrying*
Tas.						
1981	23.8	47.3	5.1	10.0	71.1	42.7
1982	24.6	46.3	9.2	11.3	66.2	42.7
WA						
1981	32.6	64.0	2.7	4.0	64.7	32.0
1982	32.7	65.6	2.8	3.3	64.5	31.1
ACT						
1981	40.0	61.6	0.4	1.7	59.7	36.7
1982	39.3	63.2	1.5	1.7	59.2	35.1

Notes: (a) flat/unit/house number included in address and all details of both addresses identical

(b) no flat/unit/house number given for either address but all remaining details identical

(c) differing addresses or addresses similar but one address missing some detail

One such exercise has revealed some interesting patterns of likely cohabitation amongst couples who are about to marry. Remembering that the forms are filled in approximately one to three months prior to the date of marriage, the table below shows the pattern of addresses which both potential bride and groom give as being their usual residence at the time of completing the form.

At present, these data are available for the ACT and two States, Western Australia and Tasmania. The Institute hopes to be able to continue this analysis to build up an Australia-wide picture. We have advised ABS of our findings in this area and the Bureau is investigating the feasibility of adopting a similar coding for marriage statistics from 1985 onwards.

The coders have now been joined by a graduate from La Trobe University, Allen Taylor, who is programming the data for analysis with the assistance of IFS staff member, George Ooi. Allen's employment under CCEP is also for 18 weeks.

IFS Study of the Economic Consequences of Marriage Breakdown: Progress Report

by Peter McDonald,
IFS Deputy Director, Planning and Research

All 850 interviews in this study (described in the last *Newsletter*, No. 9, p.11) have now been completed and the data are at an advanced stage of processing. First tabulations should be available by the end of this month and we hope to produce a preliminary report by the end of 1984.

The study has gathered information on the work and education histories of the partners to the marriage, and on the contribution of each to the marriage. From the time of separation onwards, the housing situation and sources and levels of income are traced. The economic effects of separation on the lives of the children receive specific attention as well. More closely related to the needs of the Matrimonial Property Inquiry, our study obtains information on the legal procedures which were used and on the distribution of property including the more difficult areas

of superannuation, businesses, farms and responsibility for debts. Respondents are also asked about maintenance and their attitudes to the present law.

Throughout the questionnaire, the respondents are given the opportunity to reflect upon the concrete information they have provided and to describe in their own words how they feel about what happened. For example, they are asked about the value of the advice given to them by lawyers, about Regulation 96 conferences (property distribution conferences with a Family Court registrar), about the fairness of what has happened to them and about how various dimensions of their lives have changed from the time of separation.

In all, over 30 interviewers have been involved and they report that almost all the interviewees have been most cooperative and anxious to tell their story. Many of these stories are not happy ones. In fact, one of our staff who has looked at a lot of completed schedules has described the study as 'a journey into human unhappiness'.

Further reports on this study will appear in subsequent *Newsletters*.

The Economic Consequences of Marriage Breakdown coders pictured with the survey supervisors (standing) Sue Girling-Butcher and Jean McCaughey. From left: Martin Gibson, Anne Morganti, Judith Foster, Joyce Servinis.

Family (Law?) Centres

by Don Edgar,
IFS Director

In the wake of recent violence associated with the Family Court, it is important to consider new proposals for reducing the level of hostility and conflict that inevitably surround the divorce process. One of the most promising suggestions is that made by the Chief Judge of the Family Court, Justice Elizabeth Evatt, to the Attorney-General to establish Family Law Centres based in local communities and regional centres which would enable people to seek advice well before they institute legal proceedings. The Attorney-General, Senator Gareth Evans, referred this question to the Family Law Council for consideration.

While part of the motivation for the Attorney-General's reference of this issue to the Family Law Council is related to cutting the high costs of government subsidised Legal Aid and of Family Court proceedings, the real aim is, as the Chief Judge has stated on a number of occasions, to move divorce away from the confines of the adversary system which is both costly and personally destructive. This can be done, first, by minimising the potential litigation in family law matters and maximising opportunities for conciliation or other means of settling disputes and, second, by reallocating available funds so as to increase and improve family law services to Legal Aid clients for the same or reduced expenditure.

The Family Law Council has discussed the issue of Family Law Centres at a number of meetings and is expected to make its recommendations to the Attorney-General shortly. In considering this matter, the Institute of Family Studies has supported moves to extend the concept *beyond* the notion of Family Law Centres so that such centres would serve a wider variety of family support and advisory functions than the legal ones initially intended.

The difficulty with this would be that instead of saving government expenditure the proposed family centres may require increased funding. However, as the Institute argues both in its *Annual Report* 1982-83 and in its submission to the Victorian Government Review of Early Childhood Services, there is the possibility of holding down costs by rationalising the wide variety of family advisory services that currently exist. The Institute argues further that such expenditure is warranted by the fact that every family moving through each stage of the life cycle has a need for information and support and that these needs are not at present being met in any systematic way. As far as the Institute is concerned, a preventive approach to family problems is preferable to a remedial attempt to pick up the pieces once family life has broken down.

Many separating couples need short term help with a focus on the present and immediate future needs of the family rather than on bitter recriminations which can often arise from lengthy and costly court proceedings. Early and effective means of conciliation can have both immediate and long term benefits. Conciliation should be the first resort, not a last-ditch attempt. Thus, the proposed Family Law Centres would allow individuals or couples to seek advice on exactly what is involved in divorce, what their rights would be in relation to the custody of children and the division of matrimonial property, and what the likely costs would be if they were to go ahead in this vein.

The Family Law Centres could include the provision of, or at least referral to, marriage counselling services and pre-court counselling by the qualified counsellors of the Family Court.

In Australia a great deal of pre-court counselling is already provided. In 1983, close to 10 000 sessions were made available by Family Court counsellors and these sessions led to an 80 per cent settlement rate on the matters in dispute. The Court has also moved to decentralise itself from the major Court registries to make counselling services available in regional areas, although currently inadequate staffing levels do not permit much further decentralisation or extension of pre-court counselling services. Through its Regulation 96 conferences with a Court registrar, the Court also shows a very high settlement rate which indicates how effective guided discussions can be in settling matters of family finances and matrimonial property. The problem here is that because one party must institute a proceeding for divorce before an order for a conference can be made under Regulation 96, these conferences are necessarily held in a litigation setting.

New South Wales provides another example of the preventive approach in what is called a Community Justice Centre. Three of these were set up in Redfern, Bankstown and Wollongong in 1980 and, modelled on the American Neighbourhood Justice Centres, they concentrate on neighbourhood type disputes. Positive outcomes have been recorded in 45 per cent of cases and the New South Wales report on the pilot scheme has recommended their extension in a modest fashion.

Similar facilities are provided through the Legal Aid Commissions which offer classes on divorce proceedings and financial disputes, and through marriage guidance counselling organisations which conducted over 70 000 interviews Australia-wide in 1982-83.

One of the findings that recurs frequently in the Institute's research on divorce is that people are highly dissatisfied with the role of lawyers. Inevitably, a lawyer who advises a party to dispute or to take a particular stand in relation to children or property precipitates a counter-claim from the other party's lawyer. Yet in many instances couples may have agreed with one another had skilled mediation been provided.

The Institute's study of Family Support Networks showed quite clearly the need families have for information available at the local level. They do use information services but resist approaching those services which they think may be stigmatising. It was on the basis of these findings that the Institute suggested focusing community welfare services much more on neighbourhood family centres which, because they would provide help for a variety of family matters, would not be stigmatising and would be known at the local level. The Institute has argued that facilities such as these would integrate the services currently provided in infant welfare, child care, financial counselling, citizens' advice, marriage counselling, family therapy, and women's refuges. These facilities need not necessarily be under the one roof, although that would certainly offer some economy of scale and would have the advantage of facilitating multi-problem help-giving; but, at least, such centres would serve as referral systems for people whose problems could not be sorted out by the staff at hand.

Ideally, service provision should be based on the expressed preferences and needs of users. As the Family Support Networks Study indicated, family and friends are preferred sources of assistance while government services are viewed as remote and stigmatising. This means that

family neighbourhood centres need to be located as close to the family and friends end of the scale as possible. The challenge is to make them as accessible and as often used as, say, infant welfare centres.

Already in the community there are a number of examples of how well a preventive approach can work. The infant welfare centres are probably among the most widely used services in existence; every family uses them as some stage in the family life cycle and the centres could well expand their services to include information, referral and direct advice on a whole range of other family matters. The many local schools which have an adequate parent-teacher program or an active school council also serve as a focus for family needs. The Citizens' Advisory Bureaux reach many people in a non-stigmatising setting which people feel they can approach without being labelled as potential divorcees or potential 'welfare bludgers'. And in some areas we have already viable neighbourhood centres to which people in need of support may go.

So in the Institute's view, regional centres are not enough. The model provided by infant welfare centres or the local school illustrates that people will go to a place that is familiar to them and which is frequented by their friends and neighbours. They will not travel to some formal bureaucratic, regional office which threatens them with strangers, forms to be filled in and the stigma of having been seen entering the office.

Some of the more serious problems of the Family Court need to be considered in looking at such a scheme for family support centres. Violence against Judges and other Court personnel, and industrial action by counsellors aimed at getting more staff to reduce delays and hostility, suggest that the operation of the Court and its legislation do need review. But that review must not be a knee-jerk reaction attempt to turn back the clock. It is certainly worth considering whether the problems of persons contemplating divorce might be better handled or even avoided if addressed earlier in the process and at some distance from the Court itself. It could at least be argued that persons contemplating divorce and needing to decide on issues such as maintenance, custody, access and property division would be better able to reach agreement before they are embroiled in the mystery and formality of legal proceedings and away from the (however reduced) structural restrictions of the Court.

The government would do well to extend its examination of the Family Law Centre concept so that the feasibility of providing more broadly based local family centres could be investigated and costed. As indicated in my Director's Report in this *Newsletter*, the rhetoric of political support for the family is not at present being backed up by money which will directly support family life. The legal process is only one end (the negative end) of the family issue. The Institute would like to see properly funded family centres which would integrate supportive measures for family life before the point of family breakdown. Legal advice will be part of this, but only a part.

Adolescence and the Family

by Gay Ochiltree,
IFS Fellow

Gay Ochiltree

It was once thought that events which occurred in the first five years of life were the most crucial for later development. However, it is now recognised that there are other equally important periods (although it must be remembered that development occurs throughout the life of the individual, and character, personality and so on are not fixed forever by the events of one stage). One such important period in the life cycle is adolescence (Coleman, 1980).

It is during adolescence that many important choices are made which may affect the future life direction of the individual; for example, whether to stay on at school and what school subjects to study are decisions which may later influence career options. And it is during adolescence that physical maturity brings the added responsibility of coping with sexuality and sexual identity.

Parents of teenagers

Adolescence is a time of change not only for the developing child but for parents as well. Family rules and patterns of interaction which were suitable for family life with younger children become inappropriate for the bigger, sometimes clumsy, often rowdy, frequently sullen and more reflective teenager. At the same time, parents of adolescents are often approaching or just past forty and trying to come to terms with their own mid-life crisis (O'Connor, 1981). Fantasies of future success and triumphs are being replaced by the harsher aspects of reality. Life no longer holds the same hopes for the future that once supported parents through periods of stress or hardship (Levinson, 1978).

At present, the future looks particularly bleak for many parents as they see the job market crumbling and their own job security threatened. Many men in the older age group have already been retrenched and are attempting to bring up children on unemployment benefits. Families in this category are likely to be particularly stressed, not only by the lowered standard of living, but also by the frustration, anger and depression of one or both parents trying to obtain employment. Adolescent concerns and behaviour may appear particularly frivolous in these circumstances and lead to severe conflict. Added to the parents' worries is the very real possibility that, on leaving school, their children also may join the ranks of the unemployed.

Moreover, age is beginning to leave its mark on the faces and bodies of the parents. Frequently they no longer have the energy or sense of well-being they once had and in some cases chronic illnesses associated with increasing age are emerging. All this, just as their adolescent sons and daughters blossom into shapely creatures bursting with boundless energy — albeit with pimples bursting through the smooth skin, blushes which embarrass, and bodies which have a tendency to bump into and over any object in their paths. In contemporary Western society youth is celebrated and age is no longer revered. Parents have to come to terms with their own entry into middle-age and the anticipated difficulties and lack of respect often associated with increasing age. Their own parents, the grandparents of the adolescents, may well be needing help as they grow frail or ill and the parents in these circumstances cannot help but reflect on their own inevitable future.

That some stages of the family life cycle are more difficult than others for family members is illustrated by Alison Lurie in her book *The war between the Tates*. Erica is the mother of two adolescent children, Jeffrey aged 15, and Matilda, aged 13. They have just crashed out of the house on their way to school and, surrounded by the remnants of breakfast, their mother is resting her head on the table, crying quietly to herself.

Though equally awful, the children are awful in somewhat different ways. Jeffrey is sullen, restless and intermittently violent. Matilda is sulky, lazy and intermittently dishonest. Jeffrey is obsessed with inventions and space; Matilda with clothes and pop music. Matilda is extravagant and wasteful, Jeffrey miserly and ungenerous. Jeffrey is still doing alright in school, while his sister's grades are hopeless; on the other hand, Matilda is generally much cleaner than Jeffrey.

Erica knows and remembers that Jeffrey and Matilda had once loved her. They had loved Brian [their father]. Now they quite evidently do not like either of their parents. They also do not like each other. They fight constantly, and pick on each other for their respective failings.

The worst part of it all is that the children are her fault. All the authorities and writers say so. In their innocent past Erica and Brian had blamed their shortcomings on their parents while retaining credit for their own achievements. They had passed judgement on the character of acquaintances whose young children were not as nice as Matilda and Jeffrey — but everyone did that. To have disagreeable parents excused one's faults; to have disagreeable children underlined them. The parents might not look especially guilty; they might seem outwardly to be intelligent, kind and charming people — but underneath were Mr and Mrs Hyde (Lurie, 1977).

The belief that traumatic and unsuitable experience in childhood leads to poor adjustment, failure or neurosis in later life is widespread. It originally developed out of Freud's theories (further developed into theories of child rearing) which, while promoting a greater understanding of children as sexual beings, and the role of the unconscious, have also led to a persuasive uncertainty and anxiety on the part of parents. Many parents fear that trauma may wreck the lives of their offspring, or that their parenting may prove inadequate; they fear that the child's later failure in some aspect of life may be directly attributable to failure on their part.

However, there are two fallacious beliefs in this view. The first is that the child is a passive creature who develops entirely in response to parental guidance; the second is that the child has no influence on the parents (Skolnick, 1981).

From birth, every child is different. Parents, of course, have always known this, but it was as recently as the 1970s that researchers recognised the fact in research design. The different temperaments of babies influence their parents, and from the very beginning a unique two-way interaction develops between parent and child (Hartup, 1978; Bell, 1979; Hess, 1981). The parent has greater power, knowledge and control of the environment than the child, and without doubt helps shape the personality, world view and life chances of the child; but in return the child can be compliant or non-compliant, aggressive or malleable, loving or hating and all shades of feeling in between (Collins 1975). Each child has his or her own particular qualities and abilities which in turn affect the parent. Parenting is not one-way; it is a two-way exchange between the parent and child which continues to change as the child grows and develops.

If Alison Lurie's character, Erica, had lived in the Middle Ages her problems would have been rather different. She may not have survived childbirth or illness to see her children reach adolescence. Her children may not have survived infancy or childhood to reach the teenage years. If they had survived they most likely would have been at work as apprentices in some other family under the guidance of their master, and no longer her responsibility. The concept of adolescence was non-existent and her worries would have inclined more to matters of life and death.

On the other hand, if Erica had been a working class mother in the early part of the nineteenth century in England, she and her children would have worked a ten hour day in factory or mine and tantrums, future careers, education, and many other worries of modern parents would have been unknown to her (Ochiltree and Edgar, 1981).

Mark Poster in his book *Critical theory of the family* points out the way in which the mother's role in contemporary society differs from earlier times.

> To a degree not found before in European or North American history, motherhood involves the constant supervision of children with a deep concern not simply for their physical growth and social skills but for their *psychic health*. Quite simply, when women were relegated to the home, one of their primary tasks was explicitly to supervise the minds of their children, to project into them, to attribute to them, to influence them emotionally and so forth (Poster, 1978, p. 134).

A mother's concerns and feelings of responsibility for the psychological well-being of her child can lead to guilt, frustration and fears at any stage of child development and may result in over-protection or overly rigid discipline of the child. But it is at adolescence, as the rapidly developing child strives for independence, personal space and recognition of his or her own ideas, that these fears are likely to emerge fully. This happens with Erica who feels her children no longer love her as they did when younger; indeed, she even feels they hate her.

How teenagers see parents

Some might see the split between Erica and her children as part of the 'generation gap' between adolescents and their parents. There is, however, little evidence for the existence of a generation gap and Coleman (1980) suggests the idea is more in the minds of parents than of teenagers. Research indicates that peer group values are usually not in opposition to family values and that teenagers have a more positive view of adults than adults do of teenagers.

One important reason for the confusion which exists lies in the difference between attitudes towards close family members and attitudes to more general social groupings, such as the younger generation. Thus, for example, teenagers may very well approve and look up to their own parents while expressing criticism of adults in general. Similarly, parents may deride 'hippies', 'drop-outs' or 'soccer-hooligans' while holding a favourable view of their own adolescent sons and daughters (Coleman, 1980, p. 72).

In a study of children at present being conducted by the Institute of Family Studies,* the children, half of whom are adolescents, were asked a number of questions about their parents and how they felt about them. Their answers provided strong support for the view that most teenagers see their own parents in a positive light.

Very few children in either the younger or older age group had totally negative attitudes to their parents. The few that did (usually to the father) lived in highly conflictual families where the father was the focus of continuing conflict. Children mentioned that their parents got in 'bad moods' sometimes, usually with good reason, but they did not really fear them. Mothers were usually seen as warm and nurturing and fathers often seen as kind and fun to be with, although occasionally he was frightening to younger children because of his size, his big voice and because he got angry.

When looking at the overall picture of both parents which emerged from the range of questions asked in the interview there emerged a picture of two overwhelmingly powerful creatures. Parents are seen as being good at nearly everything they do — their work, household tasks, cooking, gardening, anything. Yet, objectively, we know that they are *not* good at everything.

From the point of view of the children, the most shocking questions we asked were 'What is your Mum no good at?' and 'What is your Dad no good at?' Both adolescents and young children usually answered with 'He is good at everything' or 'She is good at everything', while looking puzzled and amazed at the questions. Then after a while as the interviewer waited, sometimes, they came up with things like, 'He's not very good at English', if the parent was of non-English speaking origin, or 'She's not very good at driving a car'. But it was very difficult for them because their picture is of parents who are basically competent (Ochiltree, 1983).

When one hears adolescents talking about these amazingly powerful, competent parents (despite some of the negative and aggravating aspects of parents) it is much easier to understand why they have difficulties becoming independent and seeking their own identity, and why they assert themselves at times so aggressively.

Teachers and others dealing with adolescents need to be particularly aware that most adolescents have great regard for their parents despite their loud complaints about parental deficiencies in understanding and dealing with issues that are important to them at a particular time. It is easy to be critical of the parents without recognition of the whole picture. Parents have a continuing relationship with their children while most teachers (and other authority figures) have a very temporary relationship. However, there are also exceptional cases where the family conflict involves more than daily issues.

The myth of the 'generation gap' continues to be widely accepted for a number of reasons. It is often based on the day-to-day arguments and fights between adolescents and other family members which when examined more closely are usually about relatively minor issues rather than life-long value differences. Also, adolescents are often moody, irritable and withdrawn from the family, particularly from parents, as their emotions see-saw. In addition, peers become increasingly important to adolescents and they spend less time with family. Yet most adolescents turn to parents for guidance over major concerns (Rutter, 1979; Coleman, 1980; Edgar, 1980).

Power relationships in the family

One way of looking at the changes in family relationships which occur at adolescence is in terms of available resources and power. At adolescence there are major changes in the distribution of resources and hence power.

* For a description of the Institute's Children in Families Study, see IFS *Annual Report*, 1982-83, Chapter 5.

The adolescent suddenly grows tall, sometimes taller than the parents, and no longer is it easy, or in some cases even possible, to use physical means of discipline. Cognitively the child develops the capacity to reflect and think in more abstract ways. Some adolescents achieve an educational level which surpasses that of their parents. The peer group and friends provide a personal resource for the adolescent outside the home, and part-time jobs provide an economic resource which frees them from total economic dependence on parents (Rutter, 1979). Money earned provides for entertainment, clothes and other commodities which the parents may not be able to afford or may not approve (Collins, 1975).

At this stage the parent has lost many of the resources for power and control which existed when the child was younger. Unfortunately, many parents try to retain the same control they had earlier and inevitably conflict occurs. Some conflict cannot be avoided but it is best if adolescents are given responsibility for their lives gradually. The ultimate aim of parenting is for children to become independent adults capable of managing their own lives, but this is sometimes forgotten (Edgar, 1980; Kagan, 1977).

There are dangers for both parents and teachers as adolescents strive for independence. They still require attention, interest and rules. If these are withdrawn by parents or teachers the teenager may feel it as a lack of caring, or even rejection, and this may lead him or her to become involved in anti-social behaviour with the peer group.

Some adolescents who may be unable to assert themselves at home and who apparently conform may, in fact, be seeking attention and pseudo-independence at school or elsewhere. This can occur for a number of reasons. It may be because of a very rigid system of rules at home; or conflict in the home and fear of adding to the turmoil; or protection of a single parent who is already overloaded with worry; or over-protection ('smother love') by parents; or parental exploitation of the child. The latter includes such things as parental demands for achievement unrelated to the child's abilities but which satisfy the parent's ego, and to role reversals where the child has to parent the parent (Coleman, 1980).

Complexities of adolescence

Adolescence is a complex period of change and for many is a painful experience for reasons entirely out of the individual's control. Clive James in his book *Unreliable memoirs* poignantly but amusingly describes his situation in secondary school. At primary school he had been a leader of the gang, as well as good at his school work. At secondary school his position was less happy.

> My essays were sometimes read out to the class. I was thereby established all over again as teacher's pet, but at least it was *something*, in those dreadful days when everyone else seemed to be doubling in size overnight, while simultaneously acquiring an adam's apple like a half-swallowed rock, a voice like Wallace Beery, and a case of acne like the boiling surface of the sun. Such are the pangs of being left behind — that you can die of envy for cratered faces weeping yellow pus (James, 1980, p. 89).

Cognitive development which occurs at adolescence (although not in all adolescents), leads to the ability to cope with abstract thought and inference. But this in itself may present difficulties.

Adolescents who have negotiated the transition between concrete and formal operational thought are in a limbo between the safe, concrete reality of childhood and the indeterminate existential reality of adult commitment, liberated from the literal reality to which they were confined as children but not yet constrained by adult commitment to work and love relations, adolescents can be omnipotent in imagination but remain relatively impotent in action. Newly awakened to the hypocrisy of the adult world but with freedom born of non-engagement and non-commitment, youth may reject and criticise this world in a way which adults may find irritatingly naive or refreshingly idealistic (Baumrind, 1978, p. 259).

Adolescents caught indefinitely at this stage by lack of job opportunities may be particularly difficult to live with, both for themselves and for other family members.

Teenagers and society

Modern adolescence is more than just a physical and emotional stage of life. It is linked into a social context in which most adolescents stay at school until at least 15 years of age. In addition, the modern Western context has recently changed to one in which it is difficult for young people to get jobs, particularly those with little education, although there are no longer guarantees for those who do go on to higher education.

Today's adolescents have grown up in an affluent society with expectations of an affluent lifestyle. They have been trained to be consumers by advertising and by emulation of those around them (Rutter, 1979). Yet for many of them the future is life on the dole, visiting the local CYSS group, or lying on their backs watching television.

Until recently parents, too, have not expected to have their school leavers at home and in the house after leaving school. Their expectations have been of the adolescent either leaving school and taking a job or continuing at school to gain better qualifications before entering the workforce. We are living in the context of rapid change, of shrinking job opportunities and increasing use of technology, all of which add pressure to the experience of growing up and to the responsibilities of parenting.

The pattern of increasing youth unemployment, which is greater for girls than for boys, means that for many older adolescents independence from parents has become an impossible dream. Some adolescents who are caught in an intolerable home situation leave to join the growing number of homeless youth in the streets. Others stay at home out of necessity even though their home life is unhappy or they are longing to live an independent life.

The move to an extension of education and a greater variety of courses and opportunities in schools, while solving some problems, does not solve this particular problem. At present there is no solution, but the situation could be aided by the provision of government-backed communal houses for youth located throughout the city. Such a move might prevent further family breakdowns and additions to the growing population of homeless youth. Another option might be some form of youth wage which would allow them greater freedom to make choices regarding home and career future.

The present outlook for many adolescents and their families is not a happy one and prospects are grim unless changes are made — changes based on a recognition of the needs of adolescents in contemporary society.

References

Bell, R. Q. (1979), 'Parent, child and reciprocal influences', *American Psychologist*, Vol. 34, pp. 821-826

Baumrind, D. (1978), 'Parenting disciplinary patterns and social competence in children' in *Youth and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 239-276.

Coleman, John G. (1980), *The nature of adolescence*, Methuen, London.

Edgar, Don E. (1980), *Introduction to Australian society*, Prentice-Hall, Sydney.

Hartup, W. W. (1978), 'Perspectives on child and family interaction: past, present and future', in Lerner, R. L. and Spanier, G. B. eds., *Child influences on marital and family interaction*, Academic Press, New York.

Hess, Robert D. (1981), 'Approaches to the measurement and interpretation of parent-child interaction', in Henderson, R. W. ed., *Parent-child interaction*, Academic Press, New York.

James, Clive (1980), *Unreliable memoirs*.

Kagan, J. (1977), 'The child in the family', *Daedalus*, Spring, pp. 33-56.

Levinson, Daniel J. (1978), *The seasons of a man's life*, Ballantine, New York.

Lurie, Alison (1977), *The war between the Tates*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Ochiltree, Gay (1983), 'Children's views of family life', Unpublished paper presented at the Children's Television Foundation Seminar, Melbourne.

Ochiltree, Gay and Edgar, Don (1983), *The changing face of childhood*, Discussion Paper No. 4, Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

O'Connor, Peter (1981), *Understanding the mid-life crisis*, Sun Books, Melbourne.

Poster, Mark (1978), *Critical theory of the family*, Pluto Press, London.

Rutter, Michael (1979), *Changing youth in a changing society: patterns of adolescent development and disorder*, Nuffield, London.

Skolnick, Arlene (1981), 'The family and its discontents' in *Society*, Jan/Feb, pp. 42-47.

Video Vignettes on Stepfamily Dynamics

by Ilene Wolcott
IFS Research Fellow

We are all familiar with myths surrounding the family form known as a stepfamily — a family in which one or both partners have a child or children from a former relationship who either live with them permanently or on a regular visiting basis. These myths come from fairy tales such as *Cinderella* and *Hansel and Gretel* which depict stepparents as cruel and heartless and stepchildren as neglected. More modern fantasies come from television serials like *The Brady Bunch* which portrays stepfamilies as a continuous carefree family circus.

Neither image is a help to the parents and children who live in real, every-day stepfamilies. And being a member of a stepfamily is a common situation for many adults and children in Australia today. Although precise figures on the number of stepfamilies or 'blended' families in Australia are unavailable, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has estimated that in 1982 there were 133 500 households that fit the definition of stepfamily.

If we add to these facts the information that in 1982, 53 010 children were involved in divorce proceedings and that one third of all marriages were remarriages for one or both partners then it seems safe to say that the number of stepfamilies will increase if these trends continue. Based on these statistics, it has been predicted that by 1990, 25 to 30 per cent of Australian children will be raised in households in which one of the adults is not the biological parent.

Stepfamilies may look like, behave like, and be similar to other family types in many ways, but it is the differences which, if unresolved, can cause problems and lead to tears, trauma and further family breakdown.

In recent years a growing number of resources have appeared to assist stepfamilies in understanding their special conditions and to help them develop the skills for resolving problems.

Stepfamily Dynamics, a series of 15 colour video vignettes produced by Stepfamily Education in association with the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, is an excellent addition to available resources. The originator of the vignettes, Joy Conolly, is the author of *I married a family* and *Stepfamilies: towards a clearer understanding*. For several years she has run workshops for stepfamilies. Now she has produced this series of video vignettes that dramatically and realistically illustrate the dilemmas and problems that confront stepfamilies.

Five different stepfamily constellations each reacting to three separate situations are depicted. Two informal marriage relationships have been included among the types of families portrayed. The predicaments posed are common to many stepfamily households and are taken from situations encountered by Conolly in her work with couples that attend her support workshops. Common problems dealt with include:

- trying to create 'one big happy family';
- rivalries and territorial battles between stepsiblings over attention of own parent and possessions;
- resentments at having to share affection, time, money with the 'other' family members;
- the 'ghosts' of the family past;
- working out new rules and routines for family life;
- finding time for the marital relationship;
- discipline and authority issues.

Although a 'staged' effect is sometimes evident, for the most part scenes and dialogue are realistic and the actors' characterisations are believable. Subtle messages and actions can be picked up from the dramatisations that might be missed in even the best 'how to' book or discussion group. Sometimes it is the look of a child or the body action of a parent that truly captures the dynamics of what is happening in the family.

As each scene ends before a satisfactory resolution of the problem takes place, the vignettes are triggers for discussion of questions such as: 'What words or actions were provocative?' 'What actions were appropriate and positive?' 'What were the underlying issues that were being expressed?' 'How else could the situation have been handled?' The video tape, which screens for a total of 45 minutes, comes with a guidebook that describes each situation and suggests some possible interpretations of the events. A 'pause' mechanism can be used between each 2-3 minute episode to allow for extended discussion.

The vignettes provide an absorbing and entertaining additional dimension to written reference material. They would be a valuable resource for all professional and community groups who work with stepfamilies.

The video cassette and manual is available at a cost of $150 from Stepfamily Education, PO Box 274, Toowoomba 4350 Queensland.

Social Statistics: A Comment

by Peter McDonald,
IFS Deputy Director, Planning and Research

Peter McDonald

The editor received a letter recently from the South Australian Shadow Minister of Health, the Hon. J. C. Burdett, MLC, commenting on an article by Christine Kilmartin in the April edition of the *Newsletter* (pp. 7-8). Because it raises two issues about which the Institute is very concerned, we print Mr Burdett's letter in full:

Dear Editor,
I refer to the article in the April edition of your *Newsletter* headed 'Here Endeth the Marriage'. I do not criticise the article in any way. The article simply seeks to suggest that in talking about the duration of marriages which end in divorce, the comparative time to be considered should be the duration of cohabitation rather than the duration of the legal status of marriage.

My criticism is really directed to the newspaper articles referred to in the article in the *Newsletter*. It seems to me that when talking about the duration of marriage it is unrealistic and misleading simply to look at the duration of marriages which in fact end in divorce. Such figures, such as 10.4 years as the median duration of marriage, very readily get bandied around, whereas in fact it is the median duration of marriages which end in divorce only. This figure, of course, takes no account of the duration of lifetime marriages which may last for 20, 30 or more years.

Yours sincerely,
Hon. J. C. Burdett, MLC,
Shadow Minister of Health

Misinterpretation of social statistics

Mr Burdett has put his finger on an area of difficulty that the Institute faces when its research results are reported by the media, namely, misinterpretation of statistics. Editors who are very careful to let only specialist journalists near the latest *economic* statistics seem to unleash almost anyone near the latest *social* statistics. There also seems to be a tendency to regard social statistics as imprecise and therefore able to be reported with extensive licence. Two recent examples serve to illustrate this. An

Institute study showed that 20-25 per cent of the present generation of young people would never marry. This was reported by a metropolitan daily newspaper under the banner heading 'Marriage is doomed'. Then we reported an estimate that, at present rates, 40 per cent of marriages will end in divorce. The subsequent reports in the newspapers ranged from one third (33 per cent) to one half (50 per cent) of marriages would end in divorce. Editors would not permit the same degree of licence in reports of unemployment rates.

The problem sometimes goes even deeper. In a recent case of misreporting, we approached the editor and asked that the correction be printed. The editor (of one of Australia's leading newspapers) refused to do this in the context of a cross reference to the original, erroneous article because he would have a problem with journalists. If this example were widespread, we would be dealing with a profession more concerned with protecting its members from criticism than protecting the standards of the profession itself. Fortunately this is not generally the case, but the problem will only be solved when editors take a more responsible approach to the reporting of social statistics and when specialist journalists are employed to report social trends.

The average duration of marriages

To return to Mr Burdett's specific point, he would like us to produce an estimate of the average duration of all marriages including those which end in widowhood after a long period.

Theoretically this calculation is not difficult as it is exactly analogous to the expectation of life in a life table. In a life table, the initial population at birth is gradually depleted by death until all persons have died. The expectation of life is simply the average (mean) age at death of the group. In a life table for marriages, the initial group of marriages is gradually depleted by divorce (and separation) and by the death of one of the partners. From this table, we can easily calculate the average duration of marriages or the expected duration of a marriage.

Although there is no methodological problem involved in the calculation of the measure that Mr Burdett would like to see, there is a practical difficulty. This is that while the *duration of marriage at the time of death is recorded on* the death registration form, the data are not adequately processed. The agency which can solve this difficulty is the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Even if the available statistics were perfect, the Institute would still face a difficulty in producing measures like this on a regular basis because our present computer resources are totally inadequate for the purpose. We would like to build up a data bank of marriage and family statistics so that answers to questions such as that raised by Mr Burdett would be readily available. We have the design of the system and the technical expertise but our hard-working, little computer can't manage it.

However, the Institute has processed some statistics from the 1981 Census (see article on remarriage data coding in this *Newsletter*) which show that there are lots of Australians who are still living in their first marriage and who have been married for quite a long time.

Age group of women in 1981	*Percentage of those ever married who are still in their first marriage (%)*	*Average (median) length of marriage of those still in their first marriage (years)*
30-34	81	11.5
35-39	79	16.0
40-44	79	21.2
45-49	78	25.9
50-54	74	30.4
55-59	69	34.5
60-64	61	39.0
65-69	53	42.9
70+	26	48.1

Family Impact Assessment in Tasmania

Of interest to those who have been urging policy makers to be more aware of the likely impacts of policy changes on families are the recent guidelines issued by the Tasmanian government to its departments. As Mr Ronald Cornish, Secretary to Cabinet, put it in response to the Institute's inquiry on guidelines on family impacts:

Cabinet decided to adopt this course of action because of the following issues:

- The family, responsible for the care and development of children, is the most important social unit of society.
- The well-being of families and their ability to care for their members is of major concern, and this concern applies equally to all family types.
- Government policies affecting families should seek to strengthen and support the capacities of families to meet the needs of its members.
- Services which take over the family's functions of care and support of individuals are less effective, and costly in both human and economic terms.
- Policies have the potential to effect improved service provisions across a range of vital social needs.

The implication of this Government policy requires that all Cabinet submissions concerning housing, education, welfare, legal and recreational matters contain a 'family impact' assessment which includes the following information.

- The estimated number of families affected by category, i.e., married couple, single parent, pensioner etc., and to include the number of dependents in those families.
- The anticipated advantages and /or disadvantages of the proposed policy toward families.
- Where families are likely to be disadvantaged, the action proposed by the initiating Department to alleviate the identified hardships.
- The cost of this proposed action to the initiating Department or Agency, other Departments or Agencies, State/Commonwealth services.

Until now, South Australia has been the only State government to require a 'Family Impact Statement' to be tabled with any new piece of proposed legislation. The Institute applauds the current Tasmanian initiative and would like to see other policy makers taking a more active interest in how their actions affect the well-being of families of different types.

Social Psychology and the Family: A Report on the Annual General Meeting of Australian Social Psychologists

by Paul Amato,
IFS Research Fellow

Paul Amato

Increasing attention is being given by Australian social psychologists to the family as a research area. This is the impression I gained from attending the Annual General Meeting of Australian Social Psychologists held in Adelaide in May of this year.

A trend in recent years for social psychologists to be increasingly concerned with family processes is not coincidental. Social psychologists — who study the behaviour and experience of individuals in a social context — have traditionally been concerned with larger social issues and social problems, and a strong emphasis on applied research has always been prominent in their work. Given the dramatic changes which have occurred in the Australian family during the previous decade (increasing divorce rates, lower levels of fertility, the movement of married women into the workforce, increasing numbers of migrant families, and changing attitudes about the roles of men and women) it is not surprising that social psychologists have 'discovered' the family to be an important area of study.

A number of conference papers dealt directly with the family. This article will describe a few of the papers which may be of particular interest to readers.

The voluntary childless

A paper presented by Victor Callan from the University of Queensland summarised recent research on voluntarily

childless married couples. The decision to have children can be seen to be based on the relative costs and benefits associated with either having, or not having, children. Obvious advantages in remaining childless include economic benefits and lifestyle freedoms. However, the voluntarily childless also face great social pressure to produce children. Previous research, reported by Callan, shows that couples who decide not to have children are viewed by many people as selfish, hedonistic, materially preoccupied, and 'children haters'. Pressure from others may be especially pronounced for women, since child-rearing is more central to their socially defined role than is the case for men.

Nevertheless, many couples are opting for a childless life. Research reported by Callan indicates that these couples, compared to the general population, are more likely to be university educated and less likely to be religious. Interestingly, there is also a trend for these couples to be only children or first born children (the reader may wish to come up with an explanation for this finding). Callan concluded that more needs to be known about paths to permanent childlessness, the quality of child-free lifestyles, and the strategies used by childless couples to defend their 'deviant' fertility choice.

Handicapped siblings

The effect of growing up with a handicapped sibling was the topic of a paper presented by Maggie Kirkman from the University of Melbourne. Her findings were based on the responses of 151 adults who grew up with a brother or sister who was handicapped (physically and/or intellectually). The respondents described how they were affected in a number of areas of their lives. Overall, the respondents seemed to feel either that the effects were negative or that having a handicapped brother or sister had little effect at all. Only small numbers of respondents saw positive benefits from having a handicapped brother or sister.

For example, in relation to school life, 40 per cent of the respondents believed that having a handicapped sibling had been detrimental to their schooling. Many of these people felt embarrassed by their sibling's disability, and were frequently made fun of at school. Others said that the disability placed such heavy demands on their parents' time that they didn't get enough help from parents with school work. However, 52 per cent of the respondents said that having a handicapped sibling had no effect on their schooling.

Although few people were affected positively, many respondents viewed their childhood as being essentially unaffected by a handicapped brother or sister. Why then, did some people experience detrimental side-effects while others felt that their childhoods were entirely *normal*? Kirkman concluded that more research is necessary to determine why some siblings are more vulnerable than others. However, she suggested that the manner in which having a handicapped sibling affects the non-handicapped child's self-concept is critical. Children who can engage in self-protection strategies to enhance their self-esteem during these difficult years are more likely to cope well with a potentially detrimental family situation.

Adolescent and parent values

Judith Cashmore and Jacqueline Goodnow from Macquarie University presented the results of a study dealing with agreement on values between parents and adolescents. In each family studied, separate interviews were conducted with the mother, the father, and the adolescent on the extent to which they accepted and attached importance to a range of personal values (such as hard work, good speech, obedience, and so on). Adolescents were also asked about what they thought their parents valued.

The results were surprising in some ways. First, mothers and fathers generally showed a high level of agreement on values. However, adolescents and parents, overall, agreed very little on values. Although this initially suggested (at least to me) strong evidence for a generation gap, a further finding made this interpretation premature. Adolescents' values were very similar to the values they *perceived* their parents as having. Thus, even though the actual level of agreement was low, adolescents generally thought they were adhering to the same values that their parents were.

Overall then, it appeared that adolescents were not good at predicting their parents' values. However, this wasn't always the case. When parents held certain values very strongly, and when mothers and fathers agreed strongly, adolescents were more accurate in their perceptions of their parents' beliefs. Thus, it seems that the transmission of values from one generation to the next involves both the acceptance, and the accurate perception, of parent messages.

Parent-adolescent communication

Patricia Noller and Stephen Bagi from the University of Queensland reported on the development of a questionnaire for measuring parent-adolescent communication. Their questionnaire included questions dealing with communication in 14 different content areas, such as personal problems, social issues, politics, personal interests, relationships, and sexual attitudes.

An initial study was conducted with university students and their parents, with students completing the questionnaire to provide information on their pattern of communication with both mothers and fathers. The results indicated that adolescents of both sexes, overall, communicated more with their mothers than with their fathers. In fact, the only area in which students communicated more with fathers than with mothers was in relation to politics. Students also reported self-disclosing more to their mothers than to their fathers, and this trend was especially pronounced for daughters.

Overall, the questionnaire appears to be a useful instrument for researchers working in this area. The initial study also uncovered a piece of information which is of some relevance to the area of education. It was found that the lowest levels of communication occurred in the areas of sexual attitudes, sexual information, and sexual problems. Those who argue that families do an adequate job of educating children about sex, and that sex education has no place in our schools, may wish to consider this finding.

Family and individual pathology

Research on the relationship between individual pathology and family pathology was reported by William A. Scott and Ruth Scott from the Australian National University. They collected data from 724 members of 202 families. For each family member, self-reports of anxiety, tension, and general health were collected, along with similar reports from the person's friends and other family members. A number of measures of family distress were also administered, including information on parent-parent conflict, parent-child conflict, and the level of satisfaction with various relationships in the family.

When a composite score of 'pathology in family relations' (based on levels of conflict and dissatisfaction) was computed, it was found to be consistently correlated with the measures of individual distress. Furthermore, family conflict and dissatisfaction was found to be negatively associated with family members' satisfaction in a number of extra-family areas, such as job, recreation, social relationships, and overall life satisfaction.

Family distress and individual distress thus appear to be strongly related. The question of which comes first, of course, is a difficult one to answer. Some may argue differently, but my perspective is that the two are linked in a reciprocal 'feedback loop', with each aggravating the other. It is also interesting to note that the results of this study are consistent with some of the findings from the Institute of Family Studies' research on children. We have found a consistent relationship, among children at different age levels and in different family types, for family conflict to be associated with low child competence. This appears to be especially true of child self-esteem. The general conclusion seems quite clear: high levels of family conflict are bad for children.

Conclusion

The trend toward increasing research on the family by social psychologists is, I think, a healthy one. It fits in neatly with a general trend in the discipline toward the study of personal relationships between friends, family, kin, lovers, and neighbours. For many years social psychology was dominated by (and restricted by) the experimental method. Since it is difficult to study interaction between family members and other intimates in the 'cold' and artificial world of the laboratory, these important aspects of social life were frequently neglected. The flight from the psychological laboratory by a new generation of social psychologists has been accompanied by a greater output of research on close, intimate relationships. Since the family is perhaps the most important social group in the life of the individual, it seems only natural that social psychologists should see the family as a major focus of future research, theory, and general interest.

Dependent Spouse Rebates and their Incidence

by Kerry Lovering,
IFS Senior Research Fellow

Kerry Lovering

The Dependent Spouse Rebate (DSR) is available only to income units comprised of single income earner married couple families with or without children. Those with children now attract an additional $200 per year but did not do so in the 1981-82 taxation year when the DSR was worth $830 per year.

In July 1982 there were 1 357 900 married men in the labour force whose wives were not in paid employment and 50 400 wives in the labour force whose husbands were not in paid employment. The 1 357 900 husbands comprised 36 per cent of all males with taxable income. The 1 408 300 husbands and wives with dependent spouses comprised 22 per cent of all persons with taxable income and only 14 per cent of all income recipients.

Of these 1 408 300 married couple families (which made up only 41 per cent of all married couple families), about two thirds (68 per cent) had dependent children. However, these eligible families with dependent children comprised only 51 per cent of all families with dependent children. There were thus a further 49 per cent of married couple families with dependent children who were not entitled to the rebate. It should be noted that sole-parent families and families with less than taxable income do not, of course, receive the DSR.

What income levels attract the Dependent Spouse Rebate?

Figures for the 1981-82 taxation year (the latest available) show that average weekly earnings were just under $16 000 and that 51 per cent of male income earners earned taxable income between $4 000 and $16 000.

When the amounts of money rebated to taxpayers with dependent spouses is examined, we find that only 42 per cent went to taxpayers earning average weekly earnings or less. Indeed the income level which attracted the greatest amount of rebate was income between $20 000 and $22 000. This level attracted 9.3 per cent of the total amount of the Dependent Spouse Rebate. A further 24 per cent, or nearly a quarter of the total cost of the DSR, was granted as rebate to taxpayers whose taxable income was greater than $22 000.

Sources

Income tax statistics, 1983-84 Budget Paper No. 11, AGPS, Canberra.

ABS: *Labour force status and other characteristics of families, Australia*, Catalogue No. 6224.0.

Changes For Women In Greece

by Liz Sharman,
IFS Information Officer

In the last *Newsletter* (No. 9, pp. 8-10) we reported changes in Greek family law including abolishing the dowry, raising the age girls can marry from 14 to 18 years and bringing in the notion of shared property in marriage. These changes are quite startling not only for Greek men who are no longer the official head of the family, but for Greek women who now have rights never before allowed in the old family tradition.

There is now an organisation for promoting equal opportunities. Since early this year Chrysanthe Laiou-Antoniou has been President of the Council for Equality in the Prime Minister's Office. The general function of the nine member Council is to find solutions to cases of sex inequality and put them to the appropriate bodies. Some time before her appointment, Ms Laiou-Antoniou, speaking to the Commission of the European Community, had this to say about women in Greece and what the Government and Council proposed to do for them.

Discrimination has occurred in employment, legal matters and education and has been intensified under the rightist governments of the past fifty years. Equality of Greek men and women was enshrined in the Constitution of 1975 but the previous government did little to implement the principles.

Women's organisations have promoted feminist causes in our country and the voluntary work of many of our enlightened women has built whatever small foundations we can work on today. The present government, moving towards the socialistic transformation of the Greek community, has included the cause of women in its general policy. The program is aimed at changing the unacceptable position of women in Greek society and promises to make changes to the law to promote equality and to implement community measures to liberate women and help family life.

Apart from the changes to family law which we have mentioned, Ms Laiou-Antoniou spoke of changes to the old civil code, commercial and electoral law. For example, the government is updating old laws which prevented women transacting business without their husbands' consent and nationality laws which meant that a Greek won an marrying a foreigner had to take his nationality and couldn't confer Greek nationality on him. Legislation is underway to protect the health of mothers and care for children of working parents, unemployed and non-working women and women workers on farms. Also, there have been energetic moves to encourage family planning and to introduce new school textbooks based on the notion of equality. The Ministry of Labour is revising anachronistic laws that maintain discrimination in employment and is proposing [illegible] secure equality in the workplace. She concluded [illegible] is still a long and hard road ahead of us, but we [illegible] moved.

(Taken and abridged from the *Greek Action Bulletin* of the Australian Greek Welfare Society, Vol. 8, No. 1, March 1983)

Changes in European Family Law: England and West Germany

by Margaret Harrison,
IFS Fellow

Margaret Harrison

England

The first government divorce reform legislation for a decade has recently been passed by the English House of Commons and is expected to come into operation during September. Important changes to the law are contained in the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Bill, and the changes and their possible effects have produced a furore of controversy throughout England.

Although the grounds upon which a divorce may be granted are not affected by the Bill, the three major amendments will substantially alter English divorce law.

Divorce will be possible after one year of marriage if both parties consent

Since 1937 the law has required marriages to be of three years' duration before a divorce could be applied for, unless the petitioner could show 'exceptional hardship or depravity' which would convince a judge that the period should be reduced. The 1937 provision was originally included to pacify church and other groups who were concerned that short marriages should be given the opportunity to survive, and to generally discourage hasty divorce. Opposition is now coming from people in the community who argue that the removal of the three year rule will erode the stability and dignity of marriage.

However, supporters of the amendment argue that since 1970 it has become common practice for people to obtain a decree of judicial separation (which attracts no time restrictions), settle their financial affairs and then finally apply for divorce when the three year period has elapsed. There is no prospect of such marriages being saved and parties to them merely become involved in two sets of legal proceedings rather than one.

The needs and welfare of children are to be the first priority in financial disputes

This amendment removes the current requirement that the courts should place the parties in the financial position in which they would have been if the marriage had not broken down. This provision has been bitterly disputed since its introduction in 1973 and has been accused of producing what are colourfully known as 'alimony drones' — women who live off their husbands' maintenance, which can be ordered even in the case of short childless marriages.

The amendment stresses the desirability of parties becoming self sufficient after marriage breakdown, its proposals referring almost exclusively to the private law of maintenance by imposing a clean break on divorce (at least as regards adults). However, opponents of the amendment argue that it is the product of a middle-aged, middle-class backlash which ignores the difficulty of women finding adequately paid employment, or any employment at all. One such opponent is the English National Council for One Parent Families which has lobbied unsuccessfully for reform of tax and social security laws to make financial independence for single parents a realistic possibility.

The Family Policy Studies Centre briefing paper on the Bill has pointed out that the amendment does not attempt to alleviate the poverty of the divorced but looks almost entirely at the provision of greater equity between the parties to a divorce.

Consideration of marital conduct in financial disputes is to be taken into account where it would be 'inequitable to disregard it'

The President of the Family Division of the High Court has said that this clause merely restates the present law as interpreted by the courts. However, the Law Society has objected to references to marital behaviour becoming enshrined in statute law and claims that their inclusion will exacerbate conflict between parties to the marriage and will lead to strains in the legal aid budget as there will be an increase in the number of financial contests.

Fears about this clause also revolve around the concern that the welfare of children may be detrimentally affected where a 'bad' custodial parent is punished financially for his or her misconduct.

West Germany

Amendments to the 1977 West German divorce law are also being mooted and are expected to become effective from January 1985. The 1977 divorce reforms gave women an automatic equal share of the matrimonial home and her former husband's superannuation or life assurance entitlements. It also entitled her to maintenance in an amount appropriate to the lifestyle she enjoyed as a married woman, an entitlement which did not automatically terminate on her remarriage or repartnering. Divorced men have complained that the 1977 legislation made them the new poor, and the government has decided to reduce their financial burden.

The proposed amendments

If the amendments are passed, maintenance payments will not be ordered where the marriage was of less than three years' duration and may be curtailed completely if the former wife's conduct is considered to make her ineligible for support. Examples of such behaviour are said to include neglect of a child in the woman's custody,

attempting to discredit the husband's reputation by spreading tales, or being sexually promiscuous during the time between separation and divorce. A Munich divorce lawyer is said to have predicted that German wives will be much more faithful in the future.

Opposition to the amendments has come from the Green Party which has a high proportion of women parliamentarians. It claims that the changes are aimed at 'binding women to the kitchen sink'. In addition, the West German Women's Federation, with its total membership of ten million, is lobbying the Minister of Justice for modifications and claims that 'the last word has not yet been spoken'.

If the amendments are passed as proposed, it is estimated that 100 000 of the 620 000 divorces granted since the 1977 reforms will be referred back to the courts for revision of maintenance arrangements, and the President of the West German Judges Federation has said that dealing with the past alone will block the list for years.

Implications of the amendments

There are interesting parallels between the English and West German proposals for divorce reform. Both attempt to institute some form of clean break (although the German approach is more gentle than the English) and both reintroduce the notion of conduct linked to maintenance entitlements.

The amendments will undoubtedly be closely monitored when (in England) and if (in West Germany) they are introduced, and it will be interesting to see the extent, if any, to which they alter the divorce rates, affect the economic position of women and change the nature of post separation relationships between spouses or former spouses.

The situation in Australia

To enable these changes to be seen in the Australian context, readers may find relevant the following summary of family law in this country.

Section 44(1B) of the *Family Law Act* provides that an application for dissolution of a marriage shall not be filed within two years of the date of the marriage unless an appropriately signed form is lodged with the application. This form states that the parties to the marriage have considered a reconciliation with the assistance of a marriage counsellor, an approved marriage counselling organisation, or other suitable person or organisation nominated by the Principal Director of a Family Court. Section 44 (1C) permits the hearing of an application for dissolution, notwithstanding that the parties have not considered a reconciliation, where the court is satisfied that there are special circumstances.

Maintenance under the *Family Law Act* is awarded where the court is satisfied both as to the applicant's need for it, and the ability of the respondent to pay. No priorities as between adults and children are spelled out, but Section 73 provides that both parties are liable, according to their respective financial resources, to maintain children under 18 years. A clean break is encouraged by several sections of the Act and its general tenor (plus judicial interpretations) is to the effect that maintenance for a spouse is exceptional. Sometimes property settlements are finalised in lieu of maintenance, or an order for a specific period of time (e.g., to allow a spouse to obtain or upgrade a qualification which would facilitate employment prospects) is made. Section 72 describes the major reasons for inability of a spouse to maintain him or herself adequately as

- having the care and control of a child of the marriage;
- age, physical or mental incapacity hindering appropriate gainful employment;

and permits the existence of any other adequate reason. In addition, when considering maintenance awards, the courts are required by Section 75(2) to take into account factors such as the duration of the marriage, responsibilities for the care of dependent children, and the extent to which the marriage has affected the applicant's earning capacity. Social security entitlements are also taken into account when assessing the amount of maintenance to be paid.

Conduct is not applicable as a basis for dissolution of marriage or in the determination of ancillary issues such as custody or maintenance. The Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the Family Law Act, whose report was tabled in August 1980, recommended that the Act be amended to permit the court to look at factors other than those of financial conduct in determining maintenance and property disputes. The Committee thought there were circumstances in which it would be warranted for a wider view of the parties' conduct to be considered. However, the 1983 amendments to the Act did not take up this recommendation.

IFS Publications — New Charges

by Mari Davis,
Head, IFS Family Information Centre

With the start of the new financial year in July 1984, the Institute began charging for most of its publications. (The *Newsletter* will remain free of charge as will the *Selected Reading Lists* and *Fact Sheets*.) We do this with some regret, but it is now necessary for the Institute to recoup some of the costs of printing, postage and handling to offset the cost of new publications and other information dissemination projects.

Since the first *Newsletter* in September 1980, the Institute has published over 80 separate titles for public distribution in the various IFS series. In publishing these works, the Institute has been fulfilling its charter of encouraging the understanding of factors affecting families in Australia. Up to July 1984, the Institute has published eleven *Discussion Papers*, eight *Working Papers*, five *Occasional Papers*, five *Policy Background Papers*, four *Monographs*, nine *Family Impact Seminars*, fourteen *Selected Reading Lists*, three *Annual Reports*, three *Diaries of Social Legislation and Policy*, nine *Newsletters*, seven volumes of the Proceedings of the first *Australian Family Research Conference*, and three other reports titled *The television family, Social support in an Australian community*, and *Early childhood services: a submission*. The Institute has also produced other publications for specialised audiences such as *A child is not the 'cure' for infertility* and *Forum: children and families* as reports of seminars sponsored by the Institute.

Over these four years, demand for IFS publications has increased markedly, particularly from among the research and professional communities and from both tertiary and secondary teachers and their students. Indeed, we have had to reprint many titles to keep up with the demand.

The Institute has set the prices of publications as low as possible — about level with, or just below, the cost of photocopying. We have done this so that all who need our publications should be able to afford them. In addition, to help those organising classes or workshops, the Institute offers a special 'bulk-buying' discount of 20 per cent for purchase of ten or more copies of a title.

Those who are already on the mailing list will continue to receive the *Newsletter* free of charge and all notices about new publication releases. The Institute will continue to register new people on its mailing list. If you are already on the mailing list, there is no need to register again. Currently the mailing list has over 5 500 names registered.

A new IFS brochure, containing the revised IFS *Publications List* and detachable publications *Order Form*, is available free of charge from the Institute's Distribution Officer.

The following is a resumé of some of our recently published titles.

Discussion Paper No 11
Can the family survive?, by Peter McDonald (May 1984). Price: $1.50

In addressing an issue of great concern often expressed these days — the concern that the family 'as we know it' is rapidly disappearing, this paper analyses the latest demographic trends of family types in Australia today. Although the statistics show that the conventional nuclear family is still by far the most prominent family form, since 1966 other family forms and non-family living arrangements have been on the increase. The major changes have been a doubling of the proportion of female-headed, one-parent families, the increased frequency of couples of all ages living with no children in the household, and the increase in de facto relationships or living-together arrangements. Also, about one in eight of the 'conventional' two-parent families with children are unconventional in the sense that one or both of the parents has been married before. The author analyses the reasons for these changes and discusses the implications for Australians.

Working Paper No 6
The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale: an evaluation of its use on an Australian population, by Paul R. Amato (April 1984). Price: $1.00

The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale (CSCS) is one of the most widely used measures of children's self-esteem. However, most of the research conducted with the CSCS has been carried out in the United States. Since the CSCS was to be used as a major dependent variable in the Institute of Family Studies' research on Children in Families (Study 5), a detailed analysis of its applicability to

an Australian population was undertaken as a preliminary step. This paper presents data relating to the scale's reliability, validity, and internal structure, and makes recommendations regarding its future use.

Working Paper No 7

Widowed families with children: personal need and societal response, by Linda Rosenman, Arthur D. Shulman and Michelle Levine (May 1984). Price: $1.00

In 1981, of the dependent children who spent at least part of their lives in one-parent families, over 14 per cent were living in families made one-parent by death. In examining the impact of the death of a parent on these children and their response to growing up in a one-parent family, and in discussing the economic, social and emotional situations of widowed families with children, this paper presents information from a detailed survey of 374 widowed men and women carried out in Melbourne in 1980. The paper focuses on the surviving parents' reports on the reactions of children to the death and on the problems and concerns that the parents have with their children. It summarises the implications for social policy and social service provisions for families made sole-parent by death.

Working Paper No 8

Cost of children in Australia, by Kerry Lovering (July 1984). Price $2.00

This paper is a first attempt to estimate the cost of feeding and clothing Australian children at a basic survival level. The paper explores a number of Australian and overseas surveys which have estimated the costs of children using a variety of methods such as the budgetary 'basket of goods' approach, the equivalence scale approach and the public opinion approach. The author, using data collected by these methods, arrives at estimates on the cost of children at various ages in present-day conditions in Australia. These estimates are based on 1983 costings for food and clothes in supermarkets and retail stores in Victoria.

Monograph No 3

Relinquishing mothers in adoption: their long-term adjustment, by Robin Winkler and Margaret van Keppel (May 1984). Price: $6.00

Of the three principal elements in the adoption process — the child, the natural mother and the adoptive parents — the relinquishing mother has received minimal attention with consequently little being known about her experience of giving up a child for adoption. This study investigates the effects of relinquishing a child on the subsequent adjustment of the mother and looks closely at those factors which helped or hindered the adjustment process. The sample for the study consisted of 213 Australian women who volunteered to participate in the research. The data were obtained by a detailed questionnaire; some participants were interviewed. The study found that the effects of relinquishment on the mother were negative and long-lasting. Thus the research shows clearly that it is inappropriate to view relinquishing mothers as women who have 'put the problem behind them'.

Monograph No 4

A roof over their heads: housing issues and families in Australia, by Terry Burke, Linda Hancock and Peter Newton (June 1984). Price $10.00

This monograph looks at the nature of housing in Australia and the ways in which government housing policies have affected families and the quality of family life. The authors examine issues such as the advantages of home ownership compared to renting, access to private versus public housing, the deposit gap and its effects on family formation plans, the uneven geographic and social distribution of types and qualities of housing, and the problems of youth housing.

Policy Background Paper No 3

Marriage counselling services: priorities and policy, by Ilene Wolcott (March 1984). Price $3.00

This paper evaluates the role of marriage counselling as one of a number of community resources which have objectives of encouraging more satisfying and harmonious marital and family relationships. It explores the role of government policy in the provision of marriage counselling services, and it establishes Institute priorities and policy recommendations in this area. The author argues that currently available marriage support services are inadequately funded and often poorly conceptualised and that there is still a vast unmet need for marriage preparation, advice and counselling.

Policy Background Paper No 4

Children in stepfamilies: their legal and family status, by Patricia Harper (April 1984). Price: $3.00

This paper discusses the appropriateness of adoption as a means of establishing the legal status and family relationships of stepchildren with their step-parents. It examines the legal alternatives to adoption and concludes that an order for guardianship and/or custody would better meet the needs of the children involved. The author argues that an adoption order should be made only in exceptional circumstances.

Policy Background Paper No 5

Should families be a focus for policies?, by Frank Maas (June 1984). Price: $3.00

This paper outlines the parameters of the family policy debate — a debate often confused by perceptions of what 'the family' is. That there is not one single standard model of family life has been clearly demonstrated by the Institute of Family Studies in all its publications. Thus this paper concerns itself with the dilemmas of family policies as such and highlights the necessity for governments to think about policy impacts as these vary from one family to another. The author argues that a family perspective in policy making is useful despite the obvious pitfalls and he offers two propositions as to the usefulness of adopting a focus on families in the process of developing social and economic policies. The first is that because of the changing nature of families, their varied structures be taken into account by monitoring the effects of specific policies on families so that the nature and extent of such impact be known and understood. The second proposition is that a focus on families can be an important ideological strand in the development of progressive social policies.

AFIT Bulletin No 1

Compiled by Andrew Burbidge, Research Fellow, Institute of Family Studies (May 1984).
Price: $2.50

Issues in this new series on policies affecting the distribution of income among Australian individuals and families will be published regularly. AFIT, the acronym for Australian Families Income Transfer, is the name of a computer model which will allow the Institute of Family Studies to combine family types with national data on family incomes and to try different weighting systems on a variety of tax transfers and measures to model the impacts policy changes will have on income inequality in Australia. The bulletins will describe, analyse and comment on government policy changes and on options for change in expenditure and taxation policies.

Other publications

Early childhood services: submission to the Victorian Government Review of Early Childhood Services (September 1983). Price: $2.50

This submission by the Institute of Family Studies argues that government policies for children's services also need to take into account those policies which relate to employment, income security, housing, education and health, because the future development of services for children will take place against a background of change in families and in society. The submission documents the major changes taking place in Australia's families such as changed fertility, divorce and work patterns thus underscoring the inadequacy of the present structure of services for children in Victoria. It urges that a comprehensive and integrated system of early childhood services be available to all families, based not on the old categorisation of 'needy' families, but rather on when families decide for themselves that they need such services. Services should be available to all families at a cost all can afford.

Australian Family Research Conference November 1983, Proceedings. In seven volumes (March 1984). Price: $50.00 (full set) or $8.00 per volume.

The first Australian Family Research Conference, sponsored by the Institute of Family Studies, was held in Canberra in November 1983 at the Australian National University. The Conference was an opportunity for both the Institute's studies and those of others working in the area to be presented publicly and exposed to critical scrutiny. The 68 papers, as presented by the authors at the Conference, have been grouped thematically in seven volumes.

The income unit in the Australian tax and social security systems, by Meredith Edwards (July 1984). Price: $15.00

The Institute has published this doctoral dissertation as a contribution to the debate on the economics of the family and the implications for policy. The work scrutinises and compares the logic lying behind Australia's tax and social security systems in their choice of different income units and critically appraises assumptions made about economic behaviour within families. It uses empirical data on the actual financial behaviour of husbands and wives and links the data to an analysis of policy alternatives. It also considers the implications of recent economic and social changes affecting the employment of married women, marriage and divorce patterns and the composition of households.

Who's Who at the Institute

Our best wishes go with two members of staff who left recently and we are pleased to welcome two new members.

Terry Tremayne, data analyst and programmer in the Computer Centre, has left to take up an appointment as manager of Research Services at Reark Research.

Noreen O'Riordan, part-time typist in the Family Information Centre since 1981, has left to look after her new baby. Noreen had responsibility for the Institute's publications mailing list which, during her time here, expanded to over 5 500 records.

Leigh Baker joined the Institute's Computer Centre team in June. She is involved in systems design and support of social research.

Pat Knight is the Institute's inaugural Distribution Officer. This part-time position involves implementing the new charging system for Institute publications, control of the mailing list and distribution of Institute material.

Leigh Baker

Pat Knight

Visiting Fellow from Queensland

Mary Mannison, lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Brisbane College of Advanced Education, is spending about four months at the Institute as a Visiting Fellow from 16 July. While she is here Mary will be examining the literature on family studies curricula in tertiary colleges and producing a report on the nature and occurrence of those curricula, together with an annotated list of Australian resource materials. Also, in conjunction with Institute staff, she will develop ways in which to raise awareness of the need for family studies courses.

Mary Mannison

Visiting Fellow from the UK

The Institute was pleased to welcome Professor Douglas Hooper as a Visiting Fellow for two months at the end of 1983. Douglas is Professor of Social Work Studies in the Department of Social Administration, University of Hull in the UK with research interests in the areas of family processes and mental health, interprofessional conflict and cooperation in the caring professions, and familial care. He is also Chairman, Counselling Advisory Board of the UK National Marriage Guidance Council.

During his visit Douglas conducted seminars at the Institute and at Monash University as well as consulting with various members of staff on his own work and our studies. His experience was particularly useful to Ilene Wolcott for her now published paper on Marriage Counselling Services. Douglas also reviewed a report on case studies taken from the Institute's Family Formation Study. His visit fortunately coincided with the first Australian Family Research Conference held in Canberra in November, at which he chaired one of the sessions and was able to make further contact with Australian researchers active in his areas of interest.

Professor Douglas Hooper pictured in Canberra at the Australian Family Research Conference enjoying a glass of Australia's favourite beverage with IFS Research Fellow, Helen Glezer.

AFAM Report

by Deborah Whithear,
IFS Librarian

The Institute's Australian Family Studies Database (AFAM), being developed in the Family Information Centre, is about to go public. In September, AFAM will be available on ACI's computer network AUSINET, and by December 1984 we hope to publish a hard copy version.

We aim to include all English language material of research value from 1980 onwards about families and family life in Australia. Subject areas include family relationships and dynamics, economics and the family, issues related to fertility and infertility, sexual attitudes and behaviour, trends and change in marriage and the family, family law, counselling and education for marriage and parenthood, families with special problems, services to families, and family policy.

Material being scanned for inclusion comprises books, government reports, research reports, conferences, journals, edited collections, legislation, statistical publications and unpublished papers. Fifty Australian journals are being scanned regularly and all overseas journals entering the Family Information Centre are scanned for Australian material. Three key journals are indexed comprehensively — *Australian Journal of Sex, Marriage and the Family; Australian Journal of Family Therapy*; and *Australian Child and Family Welfare*.

At present we are indexing all material as it enters the Family Information Centre, and at the same time working to include material back to 1980. We estimate that there are approximately 3700 retrospective items to be included. By September, the database will have 1000 records and we expect to add 1500-2000 records per year.

AUSINET is available in most university, college, state, and some public libraries, so please enquire at the reference department of your library to search AFAM, from September 1984.

The following is a selection of publications indexed for AFAM in the last two months.

BLAKERS, C, 'The youth labour market: employers' views and practices; a summary of research', *Youth Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2, May 1984, pp. 43-63.

Full-time employment for teenagers has declined with only 80 per cent male and 70 per cent female employed teenagers currently working full-time, in contrast to 95 per cent for both sexes in the mid 1960s. Available part-time work has increased but these jobs are mostly casual, seasonal, temporary and poorly paid. Studies undertaken in the last eight years are reviewed in order to better understand employer attitudes and practices towards recruitment and selection, towards the qualities required or lacking in young job applicants, and to youth unemployment. The author suggests ways to redress negative and inaccurate assumptions held by many employers, and policies to encourage as well as require employers to recruit and train young people.

CAMPBELL, F. 'Access to community health care services for women with disabilities', *Australian Disability Review*, No. 1, 1984, pp. 30-33.

Provides a brief overview of community health services for disabled women and points out inadequacies, particularly in relation to access to information on sexuality. Attitudes of doctors and the general public, and access to information in the areas of marriage and body image, childbirth and child rearing, health care, contraceptive facilities, and sexual relationships are explored. Lists 22 recommendations to ensure full participation and social and physical access to health services and programs for disabled women.

HARTLEY, B. 'Families: going it alone', *Education News*, Vol. 18, No. 10, June 1984, p. 42.

This Queensland study, which involved interviewing 40 teachers and talking to another 45, found that many teachers' attitudes and values discriminated against children from one-parent families. Results from the study are listed briefly. Findings include teachers' lower expectations of behaviour and academic performance of children from one-parent families, a willingness to blame family background for children's problems, and a tendency to criticise and intervene in the privacy of students' home life which did not happen with children from two-parent families.

PHILLIPS, S. *The child in the divorcing family*, School of Education, University of New South Wales, Kensington, 1982. (University of New South Wales, Unit for Child Studies, Selected Papers No. 22.)

This paper attempts to dispel some common misunderstandings about children's feelings during parental divorce by looking at research evidence. The particular stages of cognitive and emotional development of the child are key factors in the child's adjustment. Also outlines an American program for children facing divorce which suggests the supports needed for families when adjusting to stress and changes associated with divorce.

ROWLAND, D. T., KENDIG, H. L. and JONES, R. G. 'Improving efficiency and coverage in survey research on the aged', *Australian Journal on Ageing*, Vol. 3, No. 2, May 1984, pp. 34-38.

The authors discuss approaches to survey design applied in a large-scale study of the aged in Sydney. Four main issues are discussed: methods of achieving an adequate coverage of topics and rare sub-populations while minimising the need for prolonged interviews and sample weighting; methods of locating a widely dispersed target population economically; methods of maintaining control over respondents selection; and methods of ensuring the attainment of objectives despite cost constraints and uncertainty.

WOOD, C and WESTMORE, A. *Test-tube conception: a guide for couples, doctors, and the community to the revolutionary breakthrough in treating infertility including the ethical, legal and social issues*, Hill of Content, Melbourne, 1983.

This book attempts to provide a realistic understanding of in vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer. Discusses the causes and effects of infertility, and the development of the test tube baby program including selection and treatment procedures. Evaluates and justifies the procedure, covering social and ethical issues. Also considers the role of the media in future developments, and the development of IVF clinics.

YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA. *Creating tomorrow today: a youth policy report based on nationwide consultation*, Youth Affairs Council of Australia, St. Kilda, Victoria, 1983.

Second report of a consultation program, involving over 5 000 young people throughout Australia. The principal issues raised are accommodation, education, work, income security, health, human relationships, law, youth identity, recreation and leisure, media and environment. An evaluation of the program and policy issues is provided; priority areas and directions for future action are proposed.

AFAM Institute of Family Studies

AUSTRALIAN FAMILY STUDIES DATABASE

For bibliographic information about families and family life in Australia compiled by the Institute of Family Studies

To be launched on the national network AUSINET in September 1984

Major subjects covered in AFAM are:

Family relationships and dynamics
Sexual attitudes and behaviour
Issues on fertility and infertility
Economics and the family
Families with special problems
Family counselling, therapy and education
Divorce and family law
Services to families
Trends and change in marriage and family policy

To use the database or for more information about AFAM contact the reference department in your library

or

AFAM editor
Deborah Whithear
Family Information Centre
Institute of Family Studies
766 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne 3000 Victoria
Australia

Telephone (03) 342 9100

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Workplace as a Focus for Family Support Programs

An interesting new overseas Centre which has come to our attention raises some questions about Australian initiatives for family support.

The Work and Family Information Centre, New York, is working towards a computerised data bank on companies and community-based organisations and their initiatives to support families.

The Centre is an arm of the long-standing (since 1915) The Conference Board, a network of multinational business executives who exchange information on management practice, economics and public policy. The Conference Board is based in New York, with branches in Washington DC, Canada and Belgium. Its Chairman is Thornton F. Bradshaw (of RAC Corporation) and its President is James T. Mills. Australian International Counsellors for the Board include Sir Ian McLennan (Elders IXL), Sir James McNeill (BHP), John B. Reid (James Hardie) and Sir William Vines (ANZ Bank). The network operates through conferences, research and meetings, and the new Work and Family Information Centre is part of the research arm.

Formed in July 1983, the Centre is a national clearing-house of information designed to meet the needs of the business community, government agencies and other organisations concerned with changes in work and family relationships. The Centre is concerned with the reciprocal impact of work and family interaction, acknowledging that just as today's families are affected by what happens in the workplace, the workplace is influenced by the special needs and resources that family members bring to their jobs.

The Centre collects, analyses and disseminates data on:

- personnel policies and practices that are beneficial to workers and their families;
- innovative employer partnerships with government agencies and/or community groups;
- major action on relevant legislative and regulatory issues;
- trends in family characteristics of the workforce;
- family support services offered by community organisations to businesses and labour unions;
- the effects on productivity of various family support programs.

The Centre's services are available to Conference Board Associate firms and other businesses, government agencies, social service organisations, educational and research institutions, foundations, other groups involved with work and family issues, and the media.

Research

The Centre conducts research on employer-employee relationships, employer-community partnerships, and on research methodologies appropriate for workplace studies. The 1984-85 research activities include:

- corporate financial support for child care;
- corporate perspectives on new work and family relationships;
- corporate decision making regarding work and family initiatives;
- managing corporate substance abuse programs;
- minimising the impact of job loss on families and communities;
- demographic update of family characteristics of the workforce.

Research studies are issued as Conference Board reports, research bulletins or other periodic monographs, and are distributed to Conference Board Associates and other interested organisations. Research findings are made available to the media so that a broader public may be informed of the Centre's program.

The situation in Australia

The Institute of Family Studies has a similar interest in the sort of work carried out by the Centre, although it cannot run seminars for profit or work directly for private companies. Institute research findings clearly indicate the significance of work arrangements and management practices for people's family life, and it is the view of the Director, Dr Don Edgar, that the workplace is an ideal focus for family support programs. As he says, 'We've looked at marriage education and guidance, we've looked at government-funded family support schemes and we've published papers on work and the family. But much more needs to be done to increase the sensitivity of employers to changing family structures, to the time pressures faced by their workers, and to the role of child care in managing to balance family needs with work demands'.

For further information about the Centre or for a copy of the Centre's bibliography on work and family issues, contact Helen Axel, The Work and Family Information Centre, The Conference Board, 845 Third Avenue, New York, NY 1002, USA.

Book Reviews

Our endangered children growing up in a changing world, by Vance Packard, Little, Brown, Boston, 1983. $23.85 hardback.

As the title suggests, this is a dramatic book, the theme of which is 'the upheaval and disarray . . . in child rearing patterns [which] are unprecedented in modern times'. Vance Packard portrays America as an anti-child culture that confronts children with a cool, hard world outside the home. The surge of married women (including millions of mothers) into jobs outside the home, and the splitting up of parents are seen as further threats to children's well-being in the short term, and to American society in the long run.

The author is a polemicist par excellence and his latest work should appeal to those who like the shock-horror style of journalism. It is a very uneven book both in tone, where it ranges from the breathless to the admonitory, and in substance. Some of 'the modern forms of damnation that confront children' are incest and fast food, family dissolution and modern birthing techniques, no homework and high rise urban living, working mothers and landlords who prefer dogs to children. The list is much longer and treated indiscriminately; important targets are hit but so, too, is a lot else. Such an approach elevates the trivial — junk food, the birthing position of mothers — while obscuring the importance of serious circumstances such as family dissolution. Poverty is omitted as a danger to children's development, yet poverty often accompanies family change and exacerbates problems.

Implicit in Packard's account of the ills afflicting children in the modern world is a reference point in a Utopian world of childhood in the not so distant past. Perhaps his own childhood two generations removed in rural America? This other world, he implies, was small with families which were non-mobile and stable, where sex roles were clearly defined (dad was strict but fair and mum was an apple-pie-baking homemaker), where children were self-reliant, chopped wood and knew their place, and neighbours were supportive. From this view point Packard sees the American family as decaying: mother works, the urban environment is large and unfriendly, communities no longer assent to one set of values. Where people want a shared-interest community, they construct one with housing developments for the elderly or for those without children. In contrast to the wholehearted natalism of the post war period, diverse attitudes to child bearing are voiced: families are smaller and children are born to older parents or couples may prefer to be 'child free'.

Packard interprets all these trends as 'anti-child'. This is not necessarily so and others have used the same observations as the basis for concluding that children are more carefully considered, better endowed and more highly prized. That there have been value shifts and attitude changes towards women, children and families is undeniable; that these are necessarily damaging for children is debatable. The author writes stirring stuff but his data are very selective and his assumptions are challenged by others whose work is more systematically based in demographic trends. Mary Jo Bane (1976) is one of these and her conclusions quoted here are a useful counterpoint to those of Packard:

> The myth of the decaying American family is often publicly used to bolster arguments for legislative action . . . Pointing to a new problem before proposing a new policy is probably good politics (but) many arguments are based on incomplete and inaccurate information . . . The extended family is not, in fact, declining; it never existed. Family disruption has not increased but has only changed in character. The proportion of children living with at least one parent has gone up, not down. The increased proportion of children living in single parent families results to a great extent from mothers keeping their children instead of farming them out. Mothers have changed the location and character of their work, but there is no evidence that this harms children. Nor is there any evidence that contemporary families have fewer neighbours and friends to call on for help and companionship now than in the past (p. 70).

The second part of Packard's book, 'Growing up in a changing world', has more descriptive chapters on children whose parents work and children whose parents separate. The tone and substance here are quite different. Case studies and results from some of the better studies in the field are used to trace changes, examine various successful and unsuccessful adaptations, and offer advice to parents and other caregivers.

Packard's review of some child care options is fascinating. Private enterprise has moved in to big group day care centres and, with all the marketing acumen of McDonalds, has set up chains such as Kinder Care Learning Centres which has 50 000 children enrolled in 750 centres — centres which have a Bell Tower instead of the big 'M'. Like other chains, it cannot survive on bad publicity so offers a service which is quite fair and reliable at a modest price.

In his concluding thoughts, Packard is wide ranging in examining responses to family change at the individual as well as institutional and government level. He suggests financial assistance for families with young children: 'the federal government subsidises just about every growing crop except children'. Guidelines for urban redevelopment more sensitive to changing family needs are proposed, and changes in the structure of employment are explored including parent leave, flexi time, and job security through childrearing years. All of these are institutional adjustments to different family-career needs and role conflicts.

As the title of the book suggests, this is in fact two works. 'Our endangered children' is rousing but often misleading; 'Growing up in a changing world' is a useful review of some major changes in family life which offers a range of responses and recommendations for negotiating these changes.

Reference

Bane, M. J. (1976), *Here to stay: American families in the twentieth century*, Basic Books, New York.

Reviewed by Kate Funder
IFS Research Fellow

Living on a limited income: families with young children in a provincial city, by Beverley Sparks and Vincenzo Antonetti, Ballarat College of Advanced Education, December 1983.

This interesting study looked at 23 families with young children living in the Ballarat area to discover how they managed on limited incomes.

Almost all families were receiving a pension and almost all were female single parents. Two thirds of the respondents declared that their income did not cover their costs, but only a few said that they were in debt.

The researchers found that families managed by severe cut-backs in expenditure on food, clothing, medical and dental services, transport, recreation and entertainment. The majority of families spent between 26 per cent and 45 per cent of their income on food compared to an Australian average of 19.1 per cent. Nearly half the families comprised one adult and one child and the majority of these spent between $30 and $50 per week on food. However, most respondents regarded the family diet as inadequate or barely adequate. In many instances mothers went without lunch.

Most families lived in rented houses (two thirds of these were Housing Commission tenants) and were paying considerably less rent than those in private rentals. Clothing for children generally came from friends or second-hand stores but footwear was a major financial burden. Adults gave their own clothing and appearance a very low priority. Power bills were dreaded by most families. Maintenance of appliances and operation of a car were also major problems. Lack of a car in the Ballarat area meant severe restrictions and increased isolation, particularly as public transport is limited.

The researchers found that inadequate incomes led to a 'social learning of incompetence' and a loss of self respect. The researchers classified the families (that is, the parents) into groups similar to those identified in the study by McCaughey and others, titled *Who cares?*

The first group were copers. They were more socially integrated and had much stronger links with friends and with community groups. They felt entitled to both health services and welfare services and were fairly critical of both types of services.

The second group had a lower average income with no savings. Most felt entitled to health services but had weak social networks and lacked an ability to deal promptly with problems. Members of this group were assisted by a formal network of social workers and services but did not cope as well as those with a strong community network.

The researchers found that although more money was considered to be the solution for all these families, some importance must be granted to the use or non-use of welfare agencies and support groups. The social worker was often viewed resentfully as an organiser even when recognised as a valuable resource. The Budget Advisory Service provided a valuable service, but was seen as a last resort by some families.

The most important service in the Ballarat area was the Community House which seemed to foster a sense of independence, a sense of control over one's life and high self esteem. It would appear significant that families that could cope had more contact with such local groups and with friends.

Reference

McCaughey, J., Shaver, S. and Ferber, H. (1977), *Who cares? Family problems, community and helping services*, Sun Books, Melbourne.

Reviewed by Kerry Lovering
IFS Senior Research Fellow

The Conference/Workshop Circuit

September 1984
On Being Single Again
Melbourne

This program will be run by Banu Moloney for people single again after divorce, separation or bereavement. Discussion will focus on issues such as coping with loss and separation; coping with feelings — anger, guilt, anxiety, hope, isolation; coping with relationships, old and new; parenting; finding time for yourself.

Further information: Human Resource Centre, Department of Social Work, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic. 3083. Phone (03) 478 3122.

September 1984
Journal Process Workshop
Melbourne

Welcare '84 seminar series sponsored by the Monash University Centre for Continuing Education. The Journal Process uses the concepts and techniques developed by Dr Ira Progroff to progressively enable individuals to draw their lives into focus in order to find new direction and meaning.

Further information: The Centre for Continuing Education, Monash University, Clayton, Vic. 3168. Phone (03) 541 0811 ext. 3171/8.

1-2 September 1984
Research Directions in Sociology
Melbourne

A two-day conference for teachers and students of Sociology. Topics include post-graduate research, contract research, do-it-yourself research, theory in research, feminist research. The format will include invited speakers, papers focusing on work in progress and informal workshops.

Further information: Bruce Wilson, Melbourne College of Advanced Education, 757 Swanston Street, Carlton, Vic. 3053. Phone (03) 861 9789.

5 September 1984
Court Procedures
Melbourne

This workshop is designed to help health and welfare workers who, as part of their work, may be required to attend and report to court.

Further information: Human Resources Centre, Department of Social Work, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic. 3083. Phone (03) 478 3122.

5-8 September 1984
Australian Family Therapy Conference
Canberra

This is the fifth Australian Family Therapy Conference at which ideas can be shared on forward planning for family therapy and family therapy training in Australia.

Further information: Fifth Australian Family Therapy Conference, GPO Box 1929, Canberra, ACT 2601. Phone (062) 49 8015.

10 September 1984
Dealing with Stress in the Workplace
Melbourne

This workshop will focus on stress-related concerns of staff working with disabled people and their families and on practical ways of dealing with distressful situations which may arise in the course of their work. Relaxation techniques will be an integral part of the workshop.

Further information: Social Biology Resources Centre, 139 Bouverie Street, Carlton, Vic. 3053. Phone (03) 347 8700.

13 September 1984
Counselling Couples with Sexual Problems
Melbourne

This workshop will explore the patterns of communication that may underlie inability of couples to solve their sexual problems, and the need for counsellors to discern the non-sexual issues which may underlie sexual problems. Information is offered on some commonly identified sexual problems.

Further information: Social Biology Resources Centre, 139 Bouverie Street, Carlton, Vic. 3053. Phone (03) 347 8700.

4, 11, 18 September 1984
Sunday Parents
Melbourne

The emphasis of these sessions for parents, run by Mark Pierce, will be on sharing skills and resources to improve the quality of the access arrangements for both children and parents. They will be structured to enable participants to move towards developing an ongoing support group/network.

Further information: Human Resources Centre, Department of Social Work, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic. 3083. Phone (03) 478 3122.

19 September 1984
Depression
Melbourne

Welcare '84 seminar series sponsored by the Monash University Centre for Continuing Education. Many assumptions are made about depression and most counsellors and therapists have their own theories. The aims of this seminar are to provide a critical review of theories about depression and to assess the manner in which these theories affect attitudes to clients and the way health and welfare workers oractice.

Further information: The Centre for Continuing Education, Monash University, Clayton, Vic. 3168. Phone (03) 541 0811 ext. 3171/8.

26 September and 10 October 1984
Burning Bright — Not Burning Out
Melbourne

Run by Robert Quinlan, this is a two-day workshop on relaxation and personal growth. Areas covered are practical relaxation/meditation methods to increase calmness, vitality, effectiveness; discussion of diet and exercise to increase energy; simple methods of dissipating uncomfortable emotion; structuring the working day to maintain positive energy levels.

Further information: Human Resources Centre, Department of Social Work, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Vic. 3083. Phone (03) 478 3122.

1 October 1984
Rehabilitation Counselling
Melbourne

Welcare '84 seminar series sponsored by the Monash University Centre for Continuing Education. The role of rehabilitation counsellors is changing rapidly, in line with changes in the economic and social climate. Practitioners involved with a wide range of disadvantaged groups — the unemployed, alcoholics, homeless citizens, the physically handicapped — are offered information about key issues which will affect rehabilitation counselling in the 1980s.

Further information: The Centre for Continuing Education, Monash University, Clayton, Vic. 3168. Phone (03) 541 0811 ext. 3171/8.

24 October 1984
Education in Sexuality and Relationships
Melbourne

This nine-day course provides the opportunity for professionals in the fields of health, education and welfare to gain knowledge of biological, psychological and social bases of sexual behaviours through the life span of males and females, related to different social contexts. It will also review ways of working in different professional settings, particularly where sexual health is viewed as a controversial issue.

Further information: Social Biology Resources Centre, 139 Bouverie Street, Carlton, Vic. 3053. Phone (03) 347 8700.

26 October 1984
Health of Men in Families
Melbourne

For health, education and welfare workers interested in promoting the health of men, and the active participation of both men and women in family relationships. The course will focus on ways in which the roles men adopt as parents and spouses influence their health, and will examine how health states may be affected by marriage, parenthood, widowhood, age and occupation.

Further information: Social Biology Resources Centre, 139 Bouverie Street, Carlton, Vic. 3053. Phone (03) 347 8700.

15 November 1984
Disability and Ageing
Melbourne

These two workshops are designed to suggest creative options for dependent old people, their kin and their caregivers, and to address the issues of sexual health and the promotion of quality in relationships.

Further information: Social Biology Resources Centre, 139 Bouverie Street, Carlton, Vic. 3053. Phone (03) 347 8700.

21 November 1984
Teaching Strategies in Health and Human Relations
Melbourne

This workshop is designed for people involved in the practice of health and human relations programs in school and community agencies. It will focus on choosing effective teaching styles, methods and materials for educating about health and human relations. There will be opportunities for participants to discuss and review processes that they have tested and found successful, and those that have presented difficulties.

Further information: Social Biology Resources Centre, 139 Bouverie Street, Carlton, Vic. 3053. Phone (03) 347 8700.

23 November 1984
Evaluation of Health Education Programs
Melbourne

This workshop is designed for school teachers and health educators. It will explain different methods of evaluation and explore the relative merits of particular methods in different contexts.

Further information: Social Biology Resources Centre, 139 Bouverie Street, Carlton, Vic. 3053. Phone (03) 347 8700.

22-25 November 1984
ANZAPPL Fifth Annual Congress
Melbourne

The guest speaker at the Annual Congress of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Psychiatry, Psychology and Law (ANZAPPL) is Mr Roger Adelman, senior prosecutor, Washington, USA, a noted authority on the role of psychiatric and psychological evidence in court. Papers on themes including current bioethics issues, functional overlay and family dispute resolution will be presented.

Further information: ANZAPPL, GPO Box 655E, Melbourne, Vic. 3001. Phone (03) 63 3206.

The Institute of Family Studies, established under the provisions of the Family Law Act 1975, commenced operation in February 1980. The Institute functions as a statutory authority of the Australian Government, from which it derives its financial support. The founding Director is Dr Don Edgar. The Institute has a Board of Management of seven appointed members and a permanent staff of professional and support personnel. In addition, specialist assistants and consultants in appropriate fields are engaged to assist the Institute in its work when necessary.

Functions of the Institute

The functions of the Institute as defined by the Family Law Act 1975, are:

- to promote, by the conduct, encouragement and coordination of research and other appropriate means, the identification of, and development of understanding of, the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia, with the object of promoting the protection of the family as the natural and fundamental group unit in society; and
- to advise and assist the Attorney-General in relation to the making of grants, out of moneys available under appropriations made by the Parliament, for purposes related to the functions of the Institute and the supervising of the employment of grants so made.

The Institute's activities centre around meeting the following needs:

- research on social and economic factors affecting the well-being of families of different types in Australian society;
- development of an objective understanding of what is happening to the family in Australia, including identification of the strengths, as well as problems, of Australian families;
- dissemination of information about families and family structures to all those whose work directly affects the lives of families;
- monitoring and reporting on the impact of government policies and administrative practices on families of various types in Australia; and
- evaluation of the effects of marriage counselling, premarital education and other services, including those areas of the law aimed at assisting families.

Thus the objectives of the Institute are essentially practical ones, concerned primarily with learning about real situations through research on Australian families.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE